Duke, What Made You Smell So Bad? by Michael Gold

# NEW MASSES

NOVEMBER 16, 1937 FIFTEEN CENTS A COPY

# Rockwell Kent Tells the Whole Story

## The Artist Presents the Case of the Mural Controversy with All the Documents

## Wages and the Special Session

*Pay-Checks, Living Costs, and Wages and Hours*

**By Betty Millard**

## Haymarket 1887-1937

*Story of a Famous Case of Anti-Labor Terror*

**By Alan Calmer**

## Clifford Odets's "Golden Boy"

*Reviewed by*

**Eleanor Flexner**

## A People's Front in the Making

*An Editorial*

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# BETWEEN OURSELVES

THAT slight intoxication of holiday spirit you've begun to feel makes it an opportune moment to do your friends and acquaintances a good turn—and at the same time to make an important contribution to the fight for a better life. The ad on page 25 will explain.

We've been feeling pretty gay recently for a number of reasons, not the least among which is the fact that our annual ball is in the offing. The Duke of Windsor won't be there, it's true, but the royal box won't be empty. That prince of good fellows and veteran of many hard campaigns for the people's rights—Art Young—will be in it, shedding his beams of jollity all over Webster Hall. Don't forget the date, Friday evening, December 3, and don't forget that reservations in advance are only a buck, while gate admission is $1.50. How about getting up a big party?

Watch for these articles next week or later: (1) "The Case Against Isolation," by our foreign editor, Theodore Draper, which will analyze the isolationist positions of Bruce Bliven, John T. Flynn, and Nathaniel Peffer; (2) a study of the writings of contributor H. H. Lewis, by William Carlos Williams, author of *In the American Grain* and other works. Incidentally, some of our readers may have seen an advance notice of the Trotskyist *Partisan Review,* announcing the anti-Soviet, anti-Communist contents of the first issue. William Carlos Williams is listed as a contributor, but he writes to the NEW MASSES that "the *Partisan Review* has no contribution of mine nor will I send them any."

## *What's What*

THAT anti-war song contest which we spoke about in Between Ourselves some time ago has closed, and the sponsoring organizations announce an "Anti-War Song Festival," to be held the evening of Saturday, November 20, at Stuyvesant High School in New York. The main feature of the evening will be the award of prizes and the presentation of the four prize-winning songs by Mordecai Bauman and other soloists. The Lehman Engel Madrigal Singers, the Arbeiter Sängerchor, and the Freiheit Gesangs Ferein will also be on the program. The New York City Division of the American League Against War & Fascism, which (with the American Music League and the Committee for Cultural Organization) sponsored the contest, announces that three of the prize-winning songs will be chosen by the judges, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Wallingford Riegger, Max Helfman, and Sergei Radamsky, while the fourth will be chosen by the audience.

The voice of the famous artist Pablo Picasso (one of whose paintings in behalf of the Spanish government's cause we reproduced recently) will be heard in this country for the first time the evening of Friday, December 17, when the Second American Artists' Congress opens with a public session in Carnegie Hall. He will speak to the Congress via radio from Paris, and it is planned to broadcast the speech over a nation-wide radio hookup. Mayor La Guardia will speak on the same program.

"We are supporting this play because of its powerful anti-war message and not because of its title!" This was the message received from the Gravediggers' Union by the New Theatre of Philadelphia when the theater announced the November 13 opening of Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* at the New Theatre's playhouse, 311 North Sixteenth Street.

Local 802 (New York) of the American Federation of Musicians announces an entertainment and dance to be held Monday evening, November 15, at the Hotel Astor, for the benefit of the Medical Division of the local. Don Albert and Ruby Swerling will conduct the show, and a score of "name" dance bands are expected to play.

The special anniversary edition of the *Volunteer for Liberty,* organ of the English-speaking members of the international anti-fascist brigades in Spain, has arrived. It is full of pictures bearing on the growing international crisis, and carries letters from America telling of the forward march of labor in steel and transport. The leading article, reviewing the first year of the international brigades, is signed "E. R.," which presumably stands for Edwin Rolfe, a former NEW MASSES staff member who recently became editor of the *Volunteer.*

An exhibition and auction sale of paintings, prints, and drawings by "The 10" is announced by the Brooklyn Heights Branch of the American League Against War & Fascism. The showing will be held December 3, 4, and 5 at the Brooklyn Heights Center, 85 Clark St., and the auction will be held December 5 at 2:30 p.m. Proceeds will go to Spanish refugee children.

The Communist Party will function for the first time as a stage impresario when *One-Sixth of the Earth,* a living newspaper review of twenty years of Soviet history, is presented this Saturday night, November 14, at Madison Square Garden in New York. William Z. Foster and James Ford, 1932 presidential-election standard bearers of the party, will be together on the platform at this twentieth anniversary celebration of the Russian revolution.

The New Theatre League and the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy are considering sponsoring a nation-wide tour of a program of plays on Spain. The program will feature the one-act play, *Remember Pedrosito,* by John Loftus, the prize-winning script of a recent contest on plays of loyalist Spain run by the New Theatre League. A company of half a dozen actors will tour with the program. At the moment the sponsors and the players are urgently seeking a station wagon which the players might use as their touring vehicle. The carrying through of the proposed tour depends upon the sponsors securing the loan of this station wagon. The tour is planned for not more than eight to twelve weeks, and responsibility for the return of the station wagon in good condition is guaranteed by both sponsoring organizations. Any readers who might be helpful can communicate with Ben Irwin, Organization Secretary, New Theatre League, 117 West 46th St., N. Y. C.

We should like to point out that Donald Nash, who reviewed the W.P.A. production of *Processional* in a recent issue, has never had any connection with the W.P.A. theater. This is to correct any misapprehension that may have got abroad as a consequence of a recent item in Leonard Lyon's column in the New York *Post,* which said a W.P.A. actor had reviewed adversely in our columns the play in which he was acting.

## *Who's Who*

BETTY MILLARD, who has contributed to the NEW MASSES before, is on the staff of the Labor Research Assn. . . . Rockwell Kent has long been a contributor of art work to our pages. . . . Alan Calmer was formerly an editor of the NEW MASSES. The drawings by Mitchell Siporin which accompany his article are taken from Calmer's biography of Parsons. . . . Vito Marcantonio is president of the International Labor Defense. . . . Harry Slochower is the author of the current *Three Ways of Modern Man.* . . . Jack Conroy was formerly editor of the *Anvil* and author of the well-known proletarian novel *The Disinherited.* . . . Eugene Hill is one of a corps of reviewers who are covering movies for us this season.

## *Flashbacks*

"THANK YOU," murmured August Spies on the morning of November 11, 1887, as the noose which had been placed around his neck was loosened to make him more comfortable. Then suddenly he shouted from beneath the hood covering his head, "There will come a time when our voices will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today." Defiant cries came from George Engel and Adolph Fischer who stood at his side on the scaffold; Albert Parsons, who completed the group of four, shouted, "Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America? Let me speak, Sheriff Matson, let the voice of the people be heard." Thus ended the lives of the martyrs of Chicago's Haymarket affair. . . . Also executed on November 11 was the Negro slave Nat Turner who two months before his death in 1831 led an uprising against the slave-owners in Virginia. . . . And legionnaires in Centralia, Wash., put a rope around the neck of their fellow veteran Wesley Everest on November 11, 1919. Though his teeth had been knocked out with a rifle butt, the I.W.W. victim still managed to taunt his captors with, "You haven't got the guts to lynch a man in the daytime." But night came. Everest was kidnaped from the jail, castrated, then hanged from a bridge at a point on which the rays of powerful searchlights played.

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Two weeks' notice is required for change of address. Notification direct to us rather than to the post office will give the best results.

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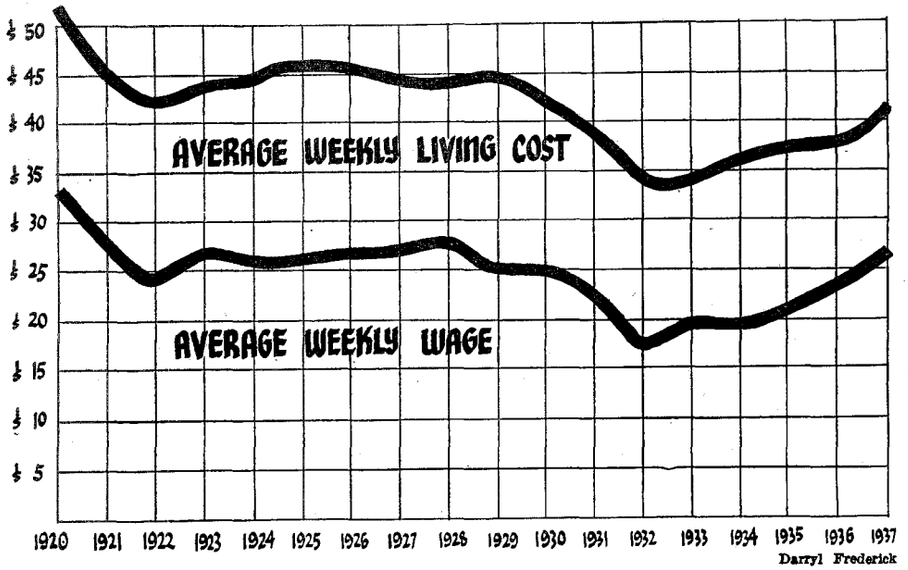
NEW MASSES
NOVEMBER 16, 1937




*Average wage compared with a "minimum-health-budget" living cost*

# Wages and the Special Session

***Joe Average American Worker points out a few things about pay scales and purchasing power that are vitally significant***

## By Betty Millard

THERE is a certain gentleman sitting in a window of the Union League Club who in his inner heart, when he can forget Roosevelt, is just about 744 percent happier than he was five years ago. For he is the average head of that average American business concern whose profits are estimated to have risen a matter of 744 percent over the last five years of recovery.[1]

And what of his employee and best customer, Joe Worker? Have five years of business recovery made a corresponding bulge in his pants pocket?

Let us question this gentleman as he comes out of the gate of what seems to be an average American industrial plant. He is free—for the evening—white, and about twice twenty-one. (The color of his skin will be explained later.) He has a wife and three children.

He is the stuff of which statistics are woven, the Average American Worker.

Time: August 31, 1937.

Q. Pardon me, sir, what is your present weekly wage?

A. $25.31.

Q. What was your wage in August 1932?

A. $16.89.

Q. Aha, a gain of 49.9 percent. Rather nice, eh what?

A. No.

Q. It seems nice.

A. Allow me to explain. It's quite true, this week I found $8.42 more in my pay envelope than five years ago this week. But the rise in the cost of living will eat up a good slice of that. My wages rose by about half, but at the same time it is costing me 15.7 percent more to live.

Q. How do you make out on $25.31?

A. That's the point, I don't. Now I don't want to appear grasping. All I want is an income sufficient to provide for the health and decency of my wife, three children, and myself. Did I have it five years ago at the bottom of the depression, with fifteen million unemployed competitors for my job? Of course not. Do I have it now? No. Five years ago I was spending $16.89 when I needed $33.72 to keep my family supplied with the barest necessities—and by that I don't mean such luxuries as savings, books, or education. This week I need $39.97, and I've got $25.31.

I happen to have here with me a chart [see above] comparing my average weekly wage in August for the last ten years[2] with the cost of an average weekly "minimum health and decency" budget for a worker's family of five[3]—that's my family—over those years.

Q. That's a considerable gap. But you're still going strong. What's the answer?

A. My wife's the answer. And Joe Jr. is the answer. She takes in what they call industrial home work to help out. He quit school last year and went to work. And my boss uses that as an excuse for not giving me a wage that I can support them on. Well, to quote Mr. John L. Lewis, "I am not opposed to the employment of women or even wives when of their own free choice. But I am violently opposed to a system which, by degrading the earnings of adult males, makes it economically necessary for wives and children to become supplementary wage earners, and then says, 'See the nice income of this family.'"

Q. Speaking of that $25.31 you are making, it would have been our guess most workers are making even less than that.

A. I was coming to that. You see, I've been talking to you under false pretenses. I'm not really the average worker at all. I'm just the recipient of the average weekly manufacturing wage, and that's something different, because while a small number of well-paid workers can and do pull up our weekly average to $25.31, the majority of American workers are getting anywhere from less than that to much less. Besides, I work for a fairly

[1] Standard Statistics Co., Inc. From combined profits index of 161 companies. Index figure for 1937 estimated by Labor Research Assn.

[2] U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics averages for manufacturing industries; 1937 figures for July.

[3] Prepared on basis of living costs in ten cities (including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Schenectady, and Reading, Pa.) by U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1919; revised for December 1936 by Labor Research Assn. on basis of U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics cost of living indices (see L.R.A. *Arsenal of Facts*). An inadequate budget allowing barest necessities.

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large concern, and such concerns usually pay better than small shops and also aren't so shy about sending in their payroll figures to the Department of Labor.

Q. That is all very interesting. It does look as though wages should be higher. But remember prices aren't going up as fast as your wages. Don't you think wages are going up as fast as industry can afford to raise them? You said yourself your wage has risen by about half since 1932. You can't have everything at once. *Festina lente*, I always say. I don't approve of your radical impatience.

A. I will explain my radical impatience to you. That average industrial plant over there on your left can afford to pay me better, both in terms of raising wages and keeping prices down. Many price increases which have raised the cost of living are due to strong industrial combinations that have raised prices more than necessary to offset wage increases.[4] In the words of President Moulton of the Brookings Institute, over the years 1934-36 "the expanding volume of sales led to increased profits — the reduction in unit costs more than offsetting the increase in wage rates." In a period of rising business it is often possible to raise wages with little or no increase in prices. The unit costs of production are so greatly reduced by the increased volume of the product turned out, that wage increases can be paid out of the savings thereby.

Furthermore, it may interest you to learn that by 1935, because of the speed-up, the new machinery we get in, and the improvement in my technical skill, I was producing just about 16 percent[5] per year more goods and services for my employer than in 1929. This was so even though my work week was shortened from forty-nine hours in 1929 to thirty-nine in 1935. My productivity has also increased rapidly since 1935. So you see wages are forming a smaller part than ever in production costs. And yet you can observe from the chart I gave you that my boss has been raising prices almost as fast as my wages. He's using my wages as the excuse.

Q. What you say seems to have some bearing on what I heard about profits going up 744 percent.

A. It sure has.

Q. Well, at least production at your plant must be booming.

A. Not exactly. We're running at three-fourths of capacity.[6] Remember that last December stock prices were 95 percent above the 1933 level, but industrial production had risen only 59 percent.

Is it because nobody wants that other 25 percent that we're not turning it out? No. There is a secret nexus that operates here. Shh—come closer and I will whisper it to you. It seems to be a secret that must be kept from a gentleman in the Union League Club. That mysterious link is "buying power." Buying power is something I lack. It's something eight million[7] unemployed workers lack. President Roosevelt says one third of the nation is ill-fed, ill-housed, and ill-clothed. They're not so through choice. They're so because they're unemployed or underpaid because not enough goods are being produced at a cheap price because goods can't be sold to people who don't have money because they're unemployed or underpaid.

John Heliker

*"Declare a 15-percent dividend and cut our production and payroll again; then bring me a copy of 'Kapital' and a couple of aspirin tablets."*

My boss is in business to make a profit. His stockholders come first. Well, all I can say is his stockholders are going to take a swoop and leap down the steep side of the graph again if he doesn't watch out. Besides rising profits and prices, there have been other warnings this year: retail stores have had lower volume sales this year than last; the same is true of grocery chain stores, the daily average dollar sales of which this month were 3 percent under last August's figures. Variety store sales also fell off.[8] This shows depression shortages are being made up and industry will have to have new buying power to lift production from now on. Otherwise we'll stage a return engagement with excessive profits, idle surpluses, and arrested wage incomes and markets.

Q. Can industry be forced to raise wages? If so, how?

A. Absolutely. By organization of mass industrial unions primarily, of course. But also by legislation. In this connection I should like to make a few remarks about the necessity for enactment of a certain bill now about to be reintroduced in Congress.

Q. The Black-Connery Fair Labor Standards Bill of 1937?

A. Exactly. This bill attempts, among other things, to set a floor for wages and a roof for hours.

Q. Something like the N.R.A.?

A. Something. But so far at least this bill hasn't got the undesirable price-fixing features of the N.R.A.

Q. Well, sir, you seem to be exceptionally well-informed on all these questions. Would you mind giving us a rough idea of just whom this bill would affect in operation, and how?

A. Not at all. It would affect two or possibly three million of the worst-paid workers connected with the production of goods in interstate commerce. All together, there are about thirty-four million[9] non-farming employed workers in this country. Of these about 14,700,000 are employed in industry, and by and large only these would be touched under the interstate commerce restrictions of the bill; although the lowest wages and longest hours are generally found among the 13,500,000 others employed in distribution and service, and in small intrastate businesses. Of the 14,700,000, about 1,384,000 on construction jobs would probably be excluded, so the bill would cover only part of the following: 9,644,000 in manufacturing; 781,000 in mining; 1,974,000 in transportation; 908,000 in utilities; total, 13,307,000.

This figure would be reduced to 12,000,000 for various reasons. And of these a guess[10] would be that three million are making under forty cents an hour.

The bill would create a board with power to revise wages upward to the limit of eighty cents an hour, or $25 a week. In addition, it would keep products made by child labor out of interstate commerce.

Q. In what specific industries are the lowest wages found?

A. The majority in some entire industries, such as cotton goods, are making less than a

[4] A. F. of L. *Monthly Survey of Business*, May 1937.

[5] National Research Project on Reëmployment Opportunities, by W.P.A. and other government agencies.

[6] Dr. H. G. Moulton, President of Brookings Institute, in a speech delivered May 21, 1937.

[7] A. F. of L. figure.

[8] Labor Research Assn. figures.

[9] Figures by Leon Henderson in *Fair Labor Standards Hearings*, Part I, page 156.

[10] Leon Henderson, *ibid.*

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forty-cent average. Here is a list[11] of the industries which were paying an average of under forty-five cents an hour in June 1937. Remember, I pointed out most workers make considerably less than the average:

| | Cents |
|---|---|
| Cotton goods | 42.1 |
| Men's furnishings | 35.4 |
| Shirts and collars | 39.3 |
| Cigars and cigarettes | 44.5 |
| Cottonseed—oil, cake, meal | 25.1 |
| Fertilizers | 42.5 |

Large establishments pay better than the small ones in all these industries. If the bill is properly administered, workers in these and other industries would have their wages especially protected during a business decline.

Q. It seems to be a good bill.

A. It is. That is, it could be. There is, however, a defect in its present form—the provision for the exemption of businesses with fewer than a certain number of employees—the number to be fixed by Congress. Small concerns are often among the worst offenders. Secretary of Labor Perkins is on record[12] as opposed to this provision; she also favors an amendment completely abolishing industrial home work, which manages to produce the worst sweatshop conditions, since it is not done in a shop at all but is piecework taken home, and done, usually with the children's help, at bottom rates.

But the chief blot on the present bill is that it leaves minimum wages and maximum hours to be set by the board, when appointed. If the N.R.A. is any indication, this lack of a stated minimum wage will work unjustly against various categories of workers, but none will suffer more from it than the Negro workers.

Q. How so?

A. Well, there are about a half million Negroes employed in interstate commerce industries. They are traditionally the lowest paid and least organized of workers. Under the N.R.A., devices known as differentials acted to keep them the worst paid. Here is how it worked. Occupational differences were set up. In the cotton textile code, outside crews and cleaners were granted a wage of $3 less than the $12 weekly minimum for the South. This differential bore no relation to previously existing scales between these and other workers—but most of these workers were Negro and unorganized.[13]

Geographic differentials were set up, based on the theory that it costs less to live in the South. But sometimes the dividing line between the North and South varied. In the fertilizer industry, 94 percent of the labor was Negro, and Delaware was defined in this code to be in the South, where lower wages could be paid. But in 669 other codes Delaware was in the North. In the laundry code the 96th longitudinal meridian was used, which left Buffalo, Tex., with a 20-cent hour on one side of the street and a 14-cent hour on the other. "Geographical differences established in nearly every code bore no relationship to the economic condition of the industry, other than the relative predominance of unorganized Negro workers in that industry."[14]

And other devices were used to maintain the differential between white and Negro wages.

There is no guarantee in the Black bill that even worse differentials will not be set up against Negro workers. Under it, minimums are to be based on the cost of living and the value of services rendered. This leaves the gates open for confusing standards of living with costs of living, and for reviving the fiction that it costs Negroes less to live and that Negroes are less efficient. The board can give "suitable treatment to other cases or classes of cases which, because of the character of the employment, justify special treatment." It would be easy to interpret this to the detriment of the Negro.

Altogether, considering that this bill may raise prices generally, it may prove a positive debasement to both Negro and other such exploited workers. I think it should definitely provide for a fixed minimum of, say, forty cents per hour, and a maximum work week of thirty-five hours. And it should outlaw all differentials.

Q. On the whole, though, you would favor this legislation?

A. Yes, definitely. American workers must raise their wages, for reasons which I have been pouring into your ear. Legislation can help us, without question. By the way, are you a reporter?

Q. Yes.

A. Then please tell your readers to send a flood of letters and telegrams to their congressmen promising them political annihilation if they don't see the bill through this session. Tell them not to forget to mention the amendments it ought to have. They might mention what they would think of any congressman who tried to make it a weaker bill than it already is.

Q. You've been very kind to answer our questions. You make us feel legislation of this sort is very important. Thanks very much.

A. Not at all.

Q. But don't forget organization is even more important, Joe.

A. Don't worry.

John Mackey

*"Canceled!"*

[11] Computed from average weekly earnings furnished by all reporting establishments to the Department of Labor.

[12] *Hearings,* Part I, page 156.

[13] Testimony of John P. Davis, secretary of the National Negro Congress; *Hearings,* Part II, page 571.

[14] John P. Davis *ibid.*

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# The Artist Tells the Whole Story

***The controversy over the post office mural is detailed here in full for the first time, with all the relevant documents***

## By Rockwell Kent

"PUERTO-RICOMIUNUN ILAPTICNUM! KE HA CHIMMEULAKUT ENGAYSCAACUT, AMNA KETCHIMMI ATTUNIM CHULI WAPTICTUN ITTICLEORAATIGUT!"

On Saturday, September 4, two paintings, measuring 6 feet 6 inches by 13 feet each, were mounted in one of the corridors of the Federal Post Office building in Washington. One of the paintings was an Arctic scene, and showed groups of Eskimos attending the departure of an airmail plane; there were reindeer and dog sledges laden with mail. The other scene was tropical. Its foreground was a level, sandy floor. Beyond this stretched the ocean. Groups of Negro figures were shown either waving farewell to a departing seaplane, carrying sacks of mail up the embankment of the shore, or showing eager, light-hearted excitement over a letter that presumably had just been received. A mail-carrier, white, occupied the central, dominating position of the picture. He was mounted on horseback.

The group whose interest was centered on the letter consisted entirely of women. One, presumably the recipient of the letter, held it playfully away from the importunate curiosity of the others. As she held it, its text was clearly readable to any spectator of the picture who might have the curiosity to approach close enough to read its normal script. That text has been quoted at the beginning of this story.

Because it is here printed, rather than written by hand, and because its flow is uninterrupted by the black thumb which in the picture made its reading somewhat difficult, it is to be much more easily read than in the picture. And on this printed page it is infinitely more conspicuous. In fact, in the picture, the letter occupied so relatively small and inconspicuous an area, that of the many people—several of them officials or employees of the Treasury Department's Procurement Division which had sponsored the paintings—few even looked close enough to see the writing, and none spoke of it. Not even when, on that same Saturday, the paintings were illuminated by floodlights for the taking of the official photographs, did anyone concern himself with the text of the letter.

On the following Tuesday, the event of two new paintings in the Federal Post Office building was given to the press, and photographs were distributed for publication.

The artist, meanwhile, heartened by the official praise which had been bestowed upon him, rejoicing in the assurances that the speak-easy lights of the corridor would soon be replaced by lights of adequate power, and confident of at last receiving not only those payments for his work which were already long overdue, but the final payment, returned to his home in the Adirondacks.

He needed the money, for his work on the decorations had of necessity been prolonged over a period of two years. No one had regretted this prolongation more than himself, but the reasons for it, the prevailingly low rate of compensation for federal art projects, had made it impossible to lay more remunerative work entirely aside. Moreover, the research and travel that the subjects of the painting necessitated had occupied much time and cost much money.

Figure, if you like, the cost of a trip to Cape Prince of Wales in northern Alaska, of a trip to Puerto Rico, of several trips from the Adirondacks to Washington and back; add to this the wages of an assistant, the cost of materials, of canvas, stretchers made to order, of packing, of transportation, the pay of a crew of men for mounting the decorations, the cost of the materials for that mounting; deduct this from the contract price for the two paintings, a total of $3000. It will be clear that little was now left as compensation for the many months of time that the artist himself had spent on the pictures.

But what of that? He, like many others who had undertaken work for the government, had been primarily actuated by the thought of serving so profoundly worthy an employer, his government, and, let us say, by the thought of the honor that such high employment conferred.

Perhaps only artists can know what relief and freedom is felt after the completion of long and arduous work. The painter—let me call him "I"—did feel it strongly. I got into my car and drove away for three or four day's change of scene.

Meanwhile, however, a keen-eyed Washington reporter was attracted by the strange language of the letter's text. "Puerto-Ricomiunun": she knew Puerto Rico. These words, whatever they should prove to mean, might be of special interest to herself, might even hold a story. That the language was not Spanish she knew. It was therefore presumably as unintelligible to the Negro girls as to herself.

Copying the words, she carried the message first to Gustav Verveeck, of the Post Office Department, who is known to speak ten languages fluently and knows something about most others. He said it looked a little bit like Finnish. A pretty Finnish girl from the Postal Savings Bureau was brought in. "Not Finnish," she pronounced. Mr. Verveeck, now interested, called in some other experts. "Must be Haitian patois," said one. "Aztec," guessed another. But it was decided that I didn't know any Aztec.

A bright young man now had a thought. "It must be Eskimo," he said, "for Kent, I think, speaks Eskimo."

With that cue, the reporter dashed off to see Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, the Smithsonian anthropologist, a learned man. But he denied all knowledge of the Eskimo language, and guessed that nobody in the Smithsonian Institution knew anything about it. The reporter then tried the Department of State; Alaskan Delegate Anthony Dimond; the office of Indian affairs; the Division of Territories and Island Possessions. She returned to the Smithsonian and tried Mr. Alexander Wetmore. He suggested Mr. Henry B. Collins, Jr., of the ethnology division.

Mr. Collins suspected that the reporter's copy might be in error. Perhaps it was, although the letter had been scrutinized through a magnifying glass. Mr. Collins got interested. He fetched two Eskimo dictionaries. He looked up whole words; he looked up separate syllables. He began to discover a meaning. "'Ke' means 'Go ahead' in Eskimo," he said. "If it's in Eskimo there is just one man who can translate it. He knows every dialect and every way of recording the language."

"Where is he?" cried the reporter, reaching for the letter and her hat and cape.

"In Denmark," said Mr. Collins

They tried to reach me at my home; no luck. The reporter then tried Stefansson. Why Stefansson had not been thought of earlier I don't know. He is the outstanding authority in America on everything concerning the Arctic and its inhabitants. Living years among the Eskimos, he has acquired, I believe, a thorough knowledge of the basic principles of the language in general, and a speaking familiarity with many of its dialects. So Stefansson—not easily, we are told, for there are many dialects of Alaskan Eskimo—translated it as follows:

"To the peoples of Puerto Rico, our friends: Go ahead, let us change chiefs. That alone can make us equal and free."

When I returned from my short vacation, I was told that, since eighteen hours before, the press had been telephoning for a statement from me about the message. I learned that

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sensational news about that message had been published. Clippings began to pour in from all over.

"Shocking! Eskimo Urges Puerto Rico to Toss Off the Yoke of Uncle Sam," was an early headline in a Washington paper. "Eskimo Inscription Urging Free Puerto Rico Intrigues Capitol"; "Revolt Plea Seen in Kent's Murals," read New York papers.

The tone of most of the editorials and articles which began to appear was one of amusement, though there was an attempt made by a section of the press to give the story a more somber tone. Accordingly, on September 14, I wrote Forbes Watson of the Procurement Division the following letter:

September 14, 1937.

Mr. Forbes Watson
Section of Painting and Sculpture
Procurement Division
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Forbes:

It is too bad the newspaper people's interest in getting a translation to my mural letter came at a moment when I was away from home and out of reach. The translation that I would have given would have been prosaic enough to have robbed it of all news value. The first call that got through to me was from, I believe, United Press. They had by then gotten Stefansson's translation.

That translation was literally accurate but they alleged a Stefansson interpretation which I instantly repudiated. I am relieved to find by press notices that have reached me in the mail that Stefansson had said nothing of the sort. This calling upon Puerto Ricans to start a revolution is nonsense. As far as the words are concerned, Stefansson's actual interpretation was absolutely correct. He has been quoted as follows:

"Perhaps instead of the word 'chiefs' you might use some such word as 'guides.' The Eskimos never had chiefs. They had no government except public opinion. They did those things which their neighbors approved. You might interpret the message to mean that they should change their form of government. This would not necessarily imply revolution or violence. It might, for example, imply such a change as we had in the United States when Roosevelt defeated Hoover for President. That was revolution, but not violent revolution.

"It might easily imply that they should seek independence, and the establishment of their own republic. It might merely mean a change in the people who now govern them. Since the Eskimos really had no government except public opinion, and since the idea of 'chiefs,' recently imported into the language, is new, they do not fully understand all the distinctions we might make in the variations of such words as chiefs, guides, governors, government, and forms of government."

Stefansson particularly emphasized that no encouragement to violence or revolution could be interpreted into the message, as this is foreign to the Eskimo idea. But, he admitted, the letter is noncommittal on the subject of how Puerto Ricans can be "equal and free."

The only word that I would change in the Stefansson translation is the word "chiefs." I would interpret it as "leaders." Puerto Rico is, of course, much in the news in recent months because of its growing movement for independence, a movement in which, despite the stupidity of some of our officials, they have not only the sympathy of most of our public but have even had the administration's assurance that it would be submitted to a plebiscite.

As Stefansson has said, nothing but a peaceful settlement of disputes is comprehensible to the Eskimo mind. That greeting from the most peace-loving race on the globe, our farthest northern citizens, to our farthest southern citizens has unfortunately suffered misinterpretation by our bloodthirsty, fire-eating, white race.

Faithfully yours,

*Meanwhile*, news in the press had subsided. People had had their little laugh. As news the matter was closed, but not, apparently for Señors Santiago Iglesias, resident commissioner of Puerto Rico, and Rafael Martinez Nadal, president of the Puerto Rican Senate. For reasons, apparently, of career—to advertise themselves, it would seem, to that particular Puerto Rican group which numbers their constituents—they must come to the front. "Puerto Ricans Draft Protest over Mural," reads a headline of September 14.

" 'The painting does not represent Puerto Rico at all,' Mr. Iglesias said, 'and I want to

World Wide Photo

*The Puerto Rico panel. The letter in the center contains the message that caused the controversy.*

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disabuse the minds of people who may have been misled to thinking it symbolizes our culture. It is nothing but perverse propaganda against our country.'

"Rafael Martinez Nadal, president of the Puerto Rican Senate, declared the mural was a calumny and insult because it depicted 'a bunch of half-naked African bushmen' receiving an air-mail letter from the Eskimos."

Mr. Iglesias and Senator Martinez Nadal said, according to the New York *Times*, "The message was of no significance politically in the Island. It was the subject matter of the picture to which they objected. 'The mural is not Puerto Rican at all,' Mr. Iglesias declared. 'Caramba!' exclaimed the president of the Island's Senate. 'It is an insult! It must be wiped out. I protest!' "

So far, it will be noted, nothing offensive or inflammatory or of political significance had been discovered in the text. Was it perhaps in the course of preparing his protest with the shallow and irresponsible purpose only of concocting objections that Mr. Iglesias attacked the text; or didn't he attack it at all, and was the stand subsequently taken by the Procurement Division of their own contrivance, cooked up as a technical excuse for rejecting the murals in response to the race-hatred jingoism of the Puerto Rican patriots?

At any rate, Secretary Morgenthau replied as follows:

> When the preliminary designs for this work were approved by the National Commission of Fine Arts, copy attached, no message appeared on any of the letter mail included in any of the designs. Since the artist did include a message, in an Eskimo dialect, in the finished mural, which constitutes a departure from the original intent, the translation and purpose of the message is now being investigated by the Procurement Division.

It is regrettable that the Procurement Division had already misinformed their superior, for on the only full-sized sketch submitted by me, there *had* appeared a written message. And now, it appears, the Procurement Division has at last embarked upon its silly quest for what the writing means. In reply to Mr. Iglesias's publicity, the New York *Times* published the following:

> "I am not one to stand upon what are called 'artists' rights,' " Mr. Kent wrote. "I would like to please my public. Although my decorations as they now appear in Washington were made in faithful adherence to the sketches approved by the Treasury Department, I will, with the Treasury Department's approval, paint in an adequate number of assorted members of the Camara de Representantes.
>
> "I'll guarantee to make those portraits so that nobody can mistake them, and I'll do the whole thing absolutely free of charge. Moreover, I'll represent the president of the Senate himself as in the act of tearing up that message of goodwill to the people of Puerto Rico." The artist added, however, that "painting the members of the Camara de Representantes, as their faces look out at me from a two-page, halftone spread, might with good cause give some offense to those Puerto Ricans who are not politicians."

That there might be no misunderstanding by the Procurement Division of the reasons of my having made a further statement to the press, nor of my thoughts about the whole controversy, I wrote Mr. Forbes Watson on September 23, the following letter:

*Dear Forbes:*

I want to compliment you and your department on the dignified silence that you have maintained throughout this teapot tempest.

I don't subscribe to a press-clipping bureau, but I am being deluged by press articles and editorials in English and Spanish. We have letters from Puerto Rican patriots and Puerto Rican societies, the whole salted in about the proportion of salt to soup by criticism from what I take to be the American sugar interests. One Martinez Nadal, president, I believe, of the Puerto Rican Senate, expressed himself in such terms that I simply had to hit back. I wrote a letter that was the basis of a column in the New York *Times* yesterday. I send you a copy of that letter.

*My offer to the offended Puerto Ricans is, of* course, genuine. I doubt, however, that it will be accepted. The impression that I get from the newspaper reports and editorials that have been sent to me is that the journalists, with their tongues in their cheeks, are having a lot of fun with a story that appears to have news value. It definitely has news value; and that, just on general principles, is a good thing for art. It is heartening that people nowadays are taking art to be controversial. I mean that the masses are beginning to get excited about this or that in a picture. The furor over the Rivera decorations at Rockefeller Center was good for art. It's good for art when a society woman attacks a prize-winning picture, as, according to *Life,* one did attack Doris Lee's picture. It's a good thing that there's a stir about the naked women mural in the Postmaster General's office. And it's a good thing for art that this excitement has occurred over my Puerto Rican mural.

We know, of course, that the occasion for the controversy is so trivial or at least so minute as to make it laughable. The press seems to know that too. Americans have a sense of humor. I realize, however, that this may be putting you people on the spot. What can we do about it? I am assuming that there must be some fire behind the smoke that the newspapers are blowing about. It's hard for me to believe that Postmaster General Farley or Secretary Morgenthau will seriously turn to the department and inform you that something must be done about this scandal. Yet you may be put in just such a position. I am wondering what you'll do.

The charges against the mural seem to be of two kinds. The indignation expressed by Señor Martinez Nadal is based on the picture misrepresenting Puerto Rico. Well, it happens not to misrepresent Puerto Rico, as I can affirm by a few dozen Leica photographs which I took there. The silly pride of a white man feeling that his country and his race have been maligned by picturing Negroes as among its inhabitants is just as foolish as if white sourdoughs of Alaska should protest the Alaskan picture on the same grounds. If I painted the Negroes out it would be unfair to those United States citizens in Puerto Rico who happen to be of African blood. If I mixed in whites, mingled a number of them, let us say, with the group of Negro girls, what an offense that would be!

The other attack is based as we know, on the possible interpretation of a minute bit of writing in an obscure Eskimo dialect on a picture of a piece of paper. Obviously, something has to be on that piece of paper. I didn't like to put on a text as trivial as, say, this: "Dear Marie, I am well. Hope you and the kids in Puerto Rico are the same. Best wishes, George Aghupuk." (It would have to be in Eskimo, of course, because my idea is that our great American mail service has brought a letter clear from the Arctic circle to the tropics.) I can imagine the American taxpayer as saying, "What! Are we running into a deficit every year for the mere sake of carrying around such tripe as this?" No, there had to be writing. There is writing on every paper surface in the picture that would allow it except the little bit that is fluttering onto the ground at the extreme right of the Puerto Rican picture. I even signed my name in the form of an addressed package in the Puerto Rican picture and an addressed envelope in the Alaskan picture. And, in fact, in the full-sized detail sketch for the Alaskan picture. Why in thunder you people, see-

# Two Poems

I

## *Autumn Song for Anti-Fascists*

The leaves come down with little grieving,
Soft in the season of unleafing.
Secure in change, in temporary
Death, the old sad heart is merry.
Delicate death, and leaf-stem pliant....
General death no nature fears,
Indifferent to tears.
Grief in the world strides like a giant.
Grief's mask, his bully forehead bare
Comes catapulting close, his stare
Frightens to stone the old and ill.
Here the mould of green, the chill
Comforts the pulse, the black heart-ache,
So that we listen while the bland trees shake
And put aside all fear
In the innocent withering of the year.
The brave assault the bully, bleed
Red on grasses and dying weed,
And redden the trampled ground.
Soldier dead, sleep sound.
Leaves of pale yellow softly pile
Where we put you, single-file.

II

## *To Sam Levinger, Milton Herndon, Ben Leider, and Many Others*

The front of trouble draws
Our best, and there they die.
O Magnet, O great Cause
That drew these young ones, I
Feel in their death, the pull,
The finality they add.
No fighter ever had
A grave so powerful.

O Magnet, O great Cause.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD.

★ ★ ★

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ing that I proposed to put such writing presumably wherever I could, didn't tell me just what to say in Eskimo I don't know. It would have saved us all a lot of trouble and the decoration and the whole Arts Projects Department and the Post Office Department a lot of good and on the whole rather delightful publicity.

I might have translated into Eskimo something like the following from Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address: "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—and certainly would if such a right were a vital one." I might —except that the text as it is speaks to the people of Puerto Rico and not to all small peoples—have signed the name of Woodrow Wilson to it. As a matter of fact, and as I have been at pains to tell the press and to write you, I made the message as fine a message as Americans could possibly send to any people, any time and anywhere.

I have been in Puerto Rico. I met Governor Winship and was his guest at a party. I listened to the federal prosecuting attorney get the low-down on every member of that jury which later brought in a conviction against Albizu Campos. I heard a Puerto Rican tory assure the prosecuting attorney that every man on his list could be depended upon to bring in a conviction. I met Puerto Rican tories and Puerto Rican nationalists. As a guest in the house of Earl P. Hanson, at that time on the executive board of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration, I listened to discussion and argument. I heard varying opinions and I learned, as it was my business to do, a lot about Puerto Rico and the political situation there. I was stirred by the thought that those people who had been without their will incorporated into the United States had a passionate desire to run their own affairs. Of course I was stirred by that because I was an American.

So from the people of Alaska, the Eskimos, I had our great mail service carry that greeting to their friends in Puerto Rico.

The furor about the thing has astonished me. I have been here in the country and until after the story had broken I had no communication whatever with the press. My first communication was by telephone with U.P. in Albany. They got me after eighteen hours of trying. The statement I gave them I repeated over the telephone to the New York *Sun,* the *Herald Tribune* (I believe), and the New York *Times*. They called me. I take my hat off to the press. They did a great job.

And now what can be done about it? I take it that you are not going to be much disturbed by Señor Nadel's race-hatred protest. The mural is, I believe, as faithful an enlargement of the sketch as could be well conceived. If you do anything, I guess it would be about the writing. Now, I am not going to take any silly stand that as an artist no one may dictate to me about my design. If that writing on the letter is offensive to our government, of course I'll change it. But I won't leave the message blank. You will realize, as an authority on art, that leaving that page blank in view of the detail with which other comparable parts are painted would be artistically as objectionable as simply painting out a face that some faction had taken objection to. There must be writing on that page. The writing should be in Eskimo. It should say something important. I will assume that there can be no objection whatever to my saying in Eskimo:

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: Have you read the wonderful words of the great emancipator, Abraham Lincoln? 'If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—and certainly would if such a right were a vital one.'"

I think that I may assume that no American citizen, not even a member of the Puerto Rican legislature or senate, could take exception to such stirring words from such a man. If I must change the writing, you will understand that I may not in self-respect creep in there at night and secretly change it. This whole matter has been given tremendous publicity. The publicity has been, as though deliberately, fed by some Puerto Rican politicians. It will, you will realize, only be further fed by the insistence of politicians—or statesmen, if you like—that the text be changed. I'll have then to make as full and complete an explanation of my attitude and of my principles, of what I know of Puerto Rico, of what I know of American justice in Puerto Rico, as the columns of the press will allow me. I am not standing upon my rights as an artist. I am standing upon my rights as a citizen.

I tell you this as I would tell friends of mine, for that is what I hold your department to be, about something that I know must happen if certain eventualities arise. I may have gone into my own feelings about Puerto Rican nationalism more than the fact of the simple, almost noncommittal text of the Eskimo letter deserves. I do this merely to let you know that if it comes to a showdown, I do feel much more strongly about the matter than anything in my letter would indicate.

If, by way of conclusion, it may seem to you to be at all relevant that the message might have been in fact addressed to a very large Puerto Rican public, let me quote Earl P. Hanson in an article in the contemporary *Science and Society*:

"Events of the past year indicate that the feeling for independence is widespread in Puerto Rico, that it is gaining in momentum, that not only hundreds of thousands, but *the majority* of Puerto Rican voters are now committed to independence."

Faithfuly yours,

Louis Lozowick

In the meantime, another statement had emanated from Iglesias. He simply would not let things alone. He handed out Mr. Morgenthau's reply to his protest. So on October 2, I wrote Mr. Forbes Watson the following letter:

October 2, 1937.

Dear Forbes:

A lecturer on art—not myself—is being held up by the slides I begged you to send me. Won't you please either order them or send me the name of your photographer I'll appreciate it very much.

I'd also appreciate it very much if the department would come across right away with at least those earlier payments which are now months overdue, that is, the payments due me when the decorations were half and three quarters finished. King Balshazar, old reprobate as he appears to have been, and much as his "countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other," when he saw the mysterious writing on the wall, was much more punctilious in the fulfillment of his agreement with Daniel than the Painting and Sculpture Section of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department has been with me. For as quickly as he learned the meaning of that prophetic and devastating inscription, "they clothed Daniel with scarlet and put a chain made of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler of the kingdom."

Don't bother about the long letter. I simply spill over a few ideas to you as an outlet to that restraint that I am practising with the press. My exhibition opens on November 1. I hope to see you then.

Faithfully yours,

P. S. How's this from a Puerto Rican correspondent? "Wicked Puerto Ricans whose wit is quick on the trigger want to know if Iglesias wouldn't be mellowed by fatherly tenderness if it were pointed out that Rockwell Kent's figures are symbolic—that they might even represent, in fact, America, Libertad, Fraternidad, and Igualidad. Those are the names of his daughters, among whom are also Luz and Paz (Light and Peace)."

Mr. Watson's reply to my letter of September 23 was brief. He told me that it is the rule of the department not to hand out photographs of the work until after it has been approved by the Procurement Division's committee; and he asked for the translation of the text! I replied on October 18 as follows:

Dear Forbes:

I have your letter of October 9 (I have only just returned from New York) and a clipping from a New York paper of October 13. In reply to your letter I send you this translation: "To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: Go ahead, let us change our leaders, that only will make us equal and free." The dialect is that of the Golovin Bay Eskimos. May I say that, considering the fact that this language is spoken by a considerable group of Americans and a racial group that we tax-paying citizens are led to believe have been from the beginning public wards of our government, the government

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has shown itself to be extremely stupid and inefficient in not being able to get from its own Indian or Eskimo department this exact, literal translation of the inscription. There is not, and never has been, anything secret about it. It is one of the languages spoken by natives of our territories.

I am interested by the first paragraph of your letter of October 9, for it seems to me to make the final and complete payment for the decorations to have been due since that Tuesday in early September which followed the Saturday on which my decorations were installed; for not only was I told that the photographs taken on the Saturday would be released on Tuesday, but they were released. I take this to mean, in the light of your statement, proof that the decorations had been accepted.

Don't trouble the department further about sending me photographs. I have already secured through other channels copies which you have released. I may not, however, end this subject without reminding a branch of that public service of which I, as a tax-payer, am one of the employers, that they are showing themselves to be extremely and wantonly inefficient, neglectful of their duties, and in general discourteous.

The clipping before me of October 13 informs me that Secretary Morgenthau had referred Commissioner Iglesias's letter of protest to the Procurement Division "with instructions to investigate the manner of selection of the artist, the selection of the themes, and the approval of the designs." It now becomes my business to investigate the conduct of a department of my government, its integrity in the fulfillment of contractual obligations, and its general human fitness to conduct such important projects as the Procurement Division is entrusted with.

Two days ago in New York I was located by the New York *Times* and interviewed by a *Times* reporter. I stated to him then that I had no reason to believe that the Procurement Division felt any dissatisfaction whatever with my decorations, nor that, although I had not yet received payment for them, the delay in paying me was due to anything but governmental red tape.

Alice Solomon

I had not at that time seen the clipping that I have referred to. In the light of this line of publicity that is being handed out by the Treasury Department I shall now feel myself free to give the papers anything that I please.

The Procurement Division appears to be acting in a profoundly silly manner. I think that when my case has at last been presented to the public, the public will agree with me. It ought to be a good department. It will be my business to try and make it one. It is a department of my government.

Faithfully yours,

P. S. I have just received a copy of the Washington *Evening Star,* October 16. It reproduces an early sketch which I sent to you and which was never accepted. It was never acted upon by your department, and was withdrawn by me with your approval before your committee ever met. It was never the property of the department in any sense. Your giving it publicity is a violation of common decency.

I did not have the sketch copyrighted, to be sure, before I sent it to you. Your reproducing it is, however, a case of plagiarism, and one on which I may care to take legal action.

On October 25, I heard from Mr. Reynolds, acting chief of the Procurement Division, Section of Painting and Sculptures, that my paintings had been accepted and that it was merely requested that I put the text of the letter in English, submitting that English to the approval of his department. My reply to Mr. Reynolds was dated October 26, and was as follows:

Mr. W. E. Reynolds
Section of Painting and Sculpture
Procurement Division
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I am most appreciative of your department's action in regard to the "controversial" message on one of the panels. While I think that the good people of Alaska might be a little upset at the ruling out of their language from a Post Office mural and doubtless would raise some kind of foolish rumpus if they had an Iglesias of their own in Washington, I can appreciate that for the avoidance of such misinterpretation as some of our papers put on the inscription, the inscription should be in English, and that the English should certainly not be such equivocal language as the literal translation of the present Eskimo is.

At the same time I think that it is to the interests of all of us now that the inscription be made to say in English practically what it has said before; for since you have not taken the position of ordering that the sentiment of the message be changed, you don't want to be misunderstood as having so ordered. In short, I would like to be able to say, if I am interviewed on the subject, merely that the decorations have been approved with only the request that the message, whatever it is, be in the common language of our country. I submit the following texts:

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our brethren: Let us in the spirit of America fight for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: We are told that you want equality and freedom. We people of the Far North wish you success."

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: Success to you in your fight for freedom, for freedom is a tradition of our country."

Of these texts I like the first one best. I am an American; and I am an ardently patriotic American because I take literally the statements of principle upon which our country was established. It is as important to me that the words of that message express my convictions as that everything that I do in art is of myself. In favor of the first text, or rather, in tactical defense of it as the text to be present on the decoration, let me say that I cannot believe that anyone in America would have the temerity to attack an inscription which for its meaning depends upon an important phrase of the Declaration of Independence.

I shall be in Washington on Monday, November 1, equipped with paints and brushes to make the desired change in the decoration. I am hoping at that time to see Mr. Forbes Watson, and I am inviting him specially to attend the opening of an exhibition of mine on the preceding Sunday afternoon. If you would be so kind as to convey your wishes to me through Mr. Watson, I would be able to be on the job at the Post Office building at 9 o'clock Monday morning. I would appreciate it if you would have the strong lights in service at that time.

Sincerely yours,

The following last and concluding letter to Mr. Watson brings the controversy up to date:

November 3, 1937.

Dear Forbes:

When I left the conference with you and Mr. Rowan on Monday, it was agreed between us that nothing should be said to the press about the results of our conference. The press got in touch with me within twenty minutes of leaving your office, and asked me for a statement. I said that I had nothing to say. I now learn, to my amazement, that your department has violated its verbal agreement with me about publicity; violated it not only through Mr. Farley's published statements, of which you possibly had no previous knowledge, but by the announcement in the press that I had refused to make the alterations and that your department was going to have the alteration done at my expense.

Your department's bad faith justifies me now in putting my entire case against the Treasury Department before the public. I shall do so by every means at my command. I want in this letter to put on record my recollections of what transpired at our conference on last Monday.

To begin with, I must refer to Mr. Reynolds's letter of October 25, in which he informed me that my murals had been accepted, that the second and third payments (long overdue) would be made promptly, and that the fourth and final payment would be made when I had substituted a message of my own in English for the message in Eskimo. In reply to this letter I had sent you the following three messages:

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our brethren: Let us in the spirit of America fight for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: We are told that you want equality and freedom. We people of the North wish you success."

"To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: Success to you in your fight for freedom, for freedom is a tradition of our country."

In a previous letter, you will recall, I had agreed to substitute the following passage from President Lincoln's first inaugural address: "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—and certainly would if such a right were a vital one." I come now to the Monday conference.

Your first statement was that your department would not accept any one of the messages I had submitted. Upon my suggesting the President Lincoln message, you said that that, too, was not acceptable, justifying your refusal of it on the ground that Lincoln could say what he liked because he wasn't paid for it, and that I couldn't have freedom because I was paid. You recall that I stressed its being my wish to not embarrass your department in any way, that I did not want the message to be controversial, that I wanted it to be a message that would express as concisely and eloquently as possible that belief in liberty and equality which, beginning as a cardinal doctrine of our Declaration of Independence, has come to be held to be the very keynote of American social ideals.

You proposed various texts as being entirely acceptable to your department. I found those texts to be innocuous and evasive and trite. I then submitted the following: "May you persevere and win that freedom and equality in which lies the promise of happiness." You will note that the objected-to reference to Puerto Rico was eliminated, that the objectionable Eskimo language, carrying with it the suggestion, repudiated by Mr. Dimond, that the

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Eskimos of Alaska liked freedom and equality, was abandoned for English. Both you and Mr. Rowan agreed at once that the message would undoubtedly be acceptable to the department. In full confidence that our difficulties were solved, Mr. Rowan carried off the message to show to Mr. Reynolds, "merely," as he said, "to get his O. K."

After considerable absence, Mr. Rowan returned, apologizing for the time he had been away. He reported that the message was not acceptable to Mr. Reynolds and the admiral. Thereupon, I told you that the discussion was at an end, that while I had made every reasonable attempt to make the message one that would express my own American ideals and at the same time be acceptable to every faction in America, I now recognized that there could be no agreement between myself and your department. It was clear to me, I said, that your department wanted to suppress every suggestion that the ideals of our Declaration of Independence were still living issues. I told you that the very fact that a department of our government would want to suppress such an expression was proof of my contention that it was necessary now in America to contend for them.

I reminded you of the passage of criminal syndicalism laws in thirty-six of our states, and of the ruling of the Supreme Court that the Bill of Rights of our Constitution is only applicable in federal concerns. And I told you that the action of your department in regard to the message on my decoration amounted to a suppression of the Bill of Rights even in the District of Columbia.

I wanted also to dispose of the objection, that you spoke of, to the Negroes in the mural. You referred again to the protests by Mr. Iglesias (with whose personal reasons for race hatred I can't concern myself), against Puerto Ricans being represented as Negroes. I renewed my offer to paint in an assorted group of white members of the Puerto Rican legislature, with Mr. Iglesias himself in the foreground and in the act of tearing up the goodwill letter which he has so vociferously denounced. Many mural painters on federal projects have introduced portraits of men and women prominent in American public life and government. Nevertheless, you refused my offer.

I told you that I would have no further discussion with your department in regard to changes, that I would not touch my decoration, that if you chose to remove it from the wall of the Post Office building, you were free to do so, that the last payment of $1200 with which you had tried, in effect, to bribe me into abandoning my principles, could be retained by the government, that I didn't want their dirty money.

You told me that the decoration had been enthusiastically approved by your art committee and that it would never be taken down. "Good," I said. "Then it shall remain on the walls of the Post Office building as my property." Here Mr. Rowan interrupted me, telling me that he had been instructed to deliver an ultimatum to me, namely, that if I would not make the changes, the department would itself make the change and deduct $100 from the final payment to me. I told you that that was your own responsibility; that, as far as I was concerned, I was through. There is a time, I reminded you, when an artist's and a citizen's principles become of greater importance than any other consideration. That time had come for me. In refusing to make the change, I stood upon my rights as an artist and a citizen.

I now inform you that my decoration on the walls of the Post Office building remains my property until it has been paid for in full, and that if you tamper with that picture in any way, even were it but to the changing of a comma in the decoration message, I will hold your department and its head, Edward Bruce, strictly responsible. I inform you too that I will not accept any tender of payment that is less than the full amount still due me under our contract.

I have this, too, to say: that in view of the Procurement Division's stand throughout this whole controversy, in view of your recent violation of an agreement between us as to publicity, in view of your having had photographed and having given out for publication a preliminary sketch of mine that I had entrusted to your custody, in view of your subsequent lie in stating that your department never gave out photographs until a picture had been accepted, and in view of the childish—or was it senile—discourtesy of your chief, Edward Bruce, on Monday, not only does Puerto Rico need to change chiefs, but the Procurement Division itself in Washington must change its chiefs. There is a growing dissatisfaction with your chief's conduct in office. It is time that we tax-payers whose employee he is, should have his fitness for that office investigated.

I want in this letter to again express my appreciation of the friendly courtesy of yourself and Mr. Rowan during the last conference.

Faithfully yours,

Snow

*Retreat from Moscow*

In presenting this documented account of the Puerto Rican mural controversy, I leave it to the judgment of the public as to whether or not the heads of the Procurement Division, Section of Painting and Sculpture, have behaved honorably in the discharge of their obligations, and with good judgment in letting themselves become victims of Messrs. Iglesias, Nadal, and, recently, Dimond; whether or not they have adhered to honorable professional practice in photographing and releasing a sketch of mine which was not their property, and further in lying about it; and whether or not they have been in general lacking in proper courtesy and in that dignity which we would like to think is demanded of important officials of our government.

I am personally convinced that the "change of chiefs" which the message of my mural recommends to the people of Puerto Rico should be put into effect in regard to the Procurement Division, Section of Painting and Sculpture. Is not the right to change chiefs an inalienable right of a free and democratic people? Is it not one of the guarantees of our Constitution? And does not the panic that those words of mine have caused certain representatives in government and heads of departments warrant the situation that there may be in those minds some thought of such perpetual leadership as is today known as fascism?

Personally, I believe that we need have no fear of fascism in America. By the entrance of labor into politics, by such signs as the important American Labor vote in the recent New York City election, by the growing awareness in America that it *might* happen here, we are prepared. I see the conduct of the Procurement Division, Section of Painting and Sculpture, as merely that of a particularly silly and childishly incompetent group in a government that is, on the whole, efficient. While it might be well to investigate the professional conduct of the Section of Painting and Sculpture, and possibly to "change its chiefs," our interest lies in such changes in the whole conception of government and in the whole relationship of government to the people as must of themselves rule out such foolishness.

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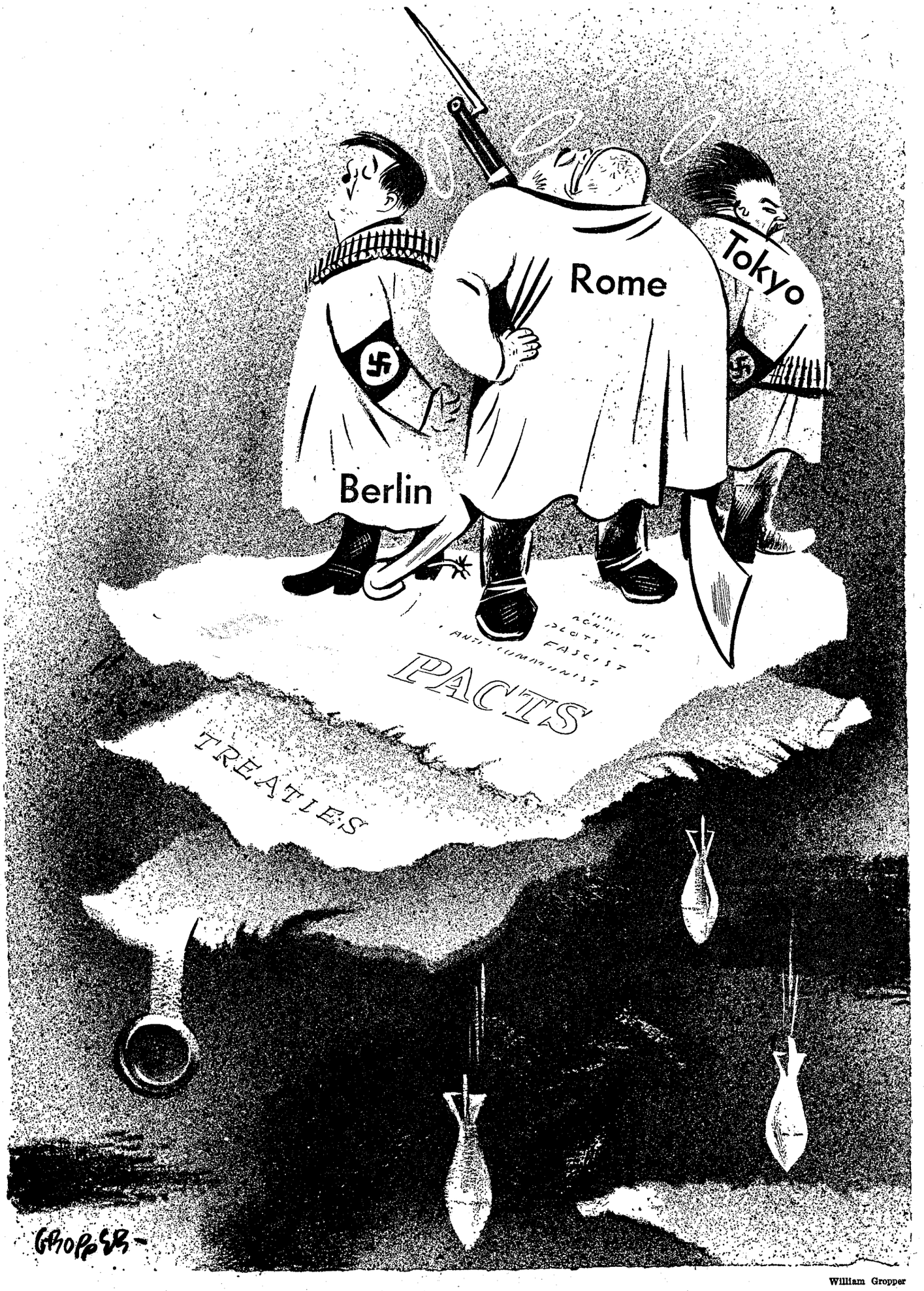


William Gropper

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# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

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★

## *Toward a Health Policy*

THE statement of principles and proposals regarding a national public health policy, signed by four hundred and thirty leading men in the medical world is so eminently a step in the right direction that, with the exception of some of the die-hard conservatives in the American Medical Association and their inveterate spokesman, Dr. Morris Fishbein, it has met with universal acclaim.

The first proposition laid down by the best representatives of the medical profession is that "the health of the people is a direct concern of the government." This proposition is axiomatic. Public health must not be left to the whims and consciences of the "philanthropists." Ever since the beginning of the crisis, our rich "benefactors" have been increasingly reluctant to contribute to charities. It seems that they are going broke —because of the "ever-heavier taxation of great fortunes," explains an editorial in the *Herald Tribune*. Hospital resources are on the wane. Millions of people living in slums and wretched farm houses are suffering for the lack of competent medical advice and care. Thousands of "medically indigent" people are dying because of medical neglect. Research is lagging. Laboratories are starved. Clinics are overcrowded. All for the lack of funds. In a country like ours, the richest country in the world, such a situation is absolutely intolerable. Something must be done, and done quickly.

The hue and cry raised by the reactionaries about "creeping collectivism," "socialism," "communism," "Sovietism," etc., is unmitigated nonsense. These internationally known scientists are motivated by only one consideration—effectiveness. They wish to practice their profession in the most effective manner possible. And there can be little doubt that modern medicine cannot be practised properly without constant aid and support from the local, state, and federal governments.

Those who are scared by the bugaboo of "socialized" medicine should study the accomplishments of Soviet medicine during the last twenty years. We urge them to read three books on the subject published within the last few weeks: *The Romance of Russian Medicine,* by Michael L. Ravitch; *Russian Medicine,* by W. Horsley Gantt; and, above all, *Socialized Medicine in the Soviet Union,* by Henry E. Sigerist, professor of the history of medicine at Johns Hopkins University. The miracles recounted in those books are all the results of socialized medicine.

We applaud most heartily the initiative taken by the progressive leaders of the medical profession. It is a great step in the needed direction, although it obviously is still far from socialized medicine.

## *A Rewrite Job*

THE government has maneuvered itself into a nice hot spot in the Rockwell Kent mural controversy. It has rejected the artist's original inscription, and now it must provide a substitute message. What to say?

We can imagine the official rewrite men gnawing their pencils over the problem. For this mural is intended to remain permanently on the walls of the Post Office Department building. Future generations of Americans will view it, and read the message from the people of Alaska to the people of Puerto Rico. That message, as Mr. Kent points out in one of his letters to the government, can scarcely be: "Dear Marie, I am well. Hope you, etc." And according to the officials of a government which owes its existence to a very violent "change of chiefs," the message cannot have anything to do with national freedom.

The official pundits have aroused widespread ridicule by their censorship. When the time comes, as come it must, and they unveil their own precious contribution to political thought, we predict an explosion of laughter that will make them wish they were safely in Alaska or Puerto Rico themselves.

## *It Can Happen to Lewis*

FOR the past five weeks the literary columnist of *News-Week,* Mr. Sinclair Lewis, has been coöperating in the world struggle against communism. The first week he demolished the proletarian novel. The second week he evidently mistook Professor Beard for a Red and came to the astonishing conclusion that the novels of Kenneth Roberts, Joseph Hergesheimer, and Willa Cather will teach the citizen "more American history than Beard and Rhodes put together." On October 18, he described Mr. Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* as "glorious dirt" and "thin screaming." "Please quit saving Spain," Lewis pleaded with Hemingway, "and start saving Ernest Hemingway." On October 25, reviewing P. G. Wodehouse's latest masterpiece of inconsequence, he wrote: "Like the *New Yorker* magazine, Mr. Wodehouse is a more dangerous propagandist than twenty *Daily Workers.*" Just to prove how innocuous the Reds are, Lewis lumped them the following week with the proprietors of Olde English tea rooms in Kansas. And in the current issue, he emerges from Winston Churchill's reactionary book with the startling conclusion that the British tory "almost loves Stalin." We call that a perfect batting average. Five times at the plate, five fouls.

Mr. Lewis has just written a novel (*Prodigal Parents*) and a play (*Publish Glad Tidings*). The novel is a thriller, according to the Hollywood correspondent of the *Daily Worker.* The "radical agitator" misleads the automobile salesman's daughter, accepts a hundred-dollar bribe from papa, berates the girl for "middle-class" prejudice, and telephones "Comrade Frieda Kitz." This stupid libel is outdone by the play, which the same correspondent describes as "a vicious and childish parody" of the lives of Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. And the playwright, unlike Mr. Churchill, doesn't "almost love" Stalin.

It hasn't happened to America, but apparently it can happen to Mr. Lewis.

## *Fascism Coördinates*

DIPLOMACY, or what your grandfather used to call blackmail on an international scale, received no great shock when Italy proclaimed its adherence to the German-Japanese alliance. Speculation turned on what it might hold for the future, for nobody questioned Mussolini's past right to hold a low-number membership card in the fascist international. In our view, this action signified what we stated in last week's issue: "It used to be said that the fascist powers took turns at aggression. Now it can be said that each fascist power is openly involved in the aggression of the others, so that it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where one begins and the other leaves off."

The immediate occasion for the Italian action is, of course, the war in China. Long ago the fascists learned that the most propitious moment for outraging the pacifist sensibilities of the 90 percent who do not want war is a time of crisis in some other part of the world. One partner of the fascist international starts a fire in the East. While the rest of the world is worrying how to extinguish it, another partner builds a pile of firewood in the West in preparation for an-

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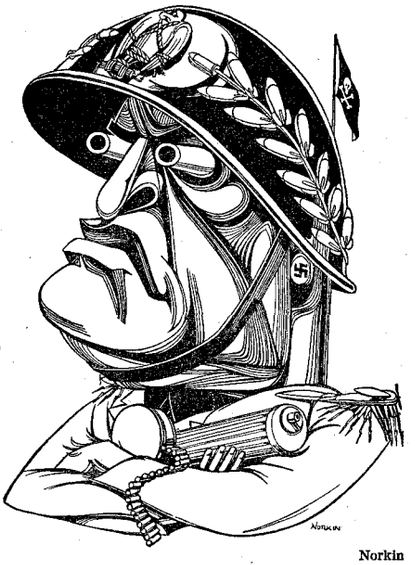
other fire just as soon as the first dies down. Thereupon, the worried nations (or at least most of them) forget about the first fire and begin worrying about the preparations for the second. No situation is more conducive than this to the games of buck-passing and blind man's buff among the diplomats of the democratice powers.

The Soviet Union has made strong representations in Rome against the alliance. It is unclear at this writing just what will issue from this action but it is perfectly clear that the primary end of the alliance is war against the Soviets. America's awakening to the fact that we are confronted with fascism in our own hemisphere, in South America, gives us hope that the realization will come, before it is too late, that our security is inextricably linked with that of the U.S.S.R.



Norkin

*Eyes on the U.S.S.R.*

## *Mexico's Oil Policy*

SINCE the beginning of the Mexican national revolution in 1910, oil has been one of the determining factors in the swing of administrations from left to right. Carranza, Obregon, and Calles, to name but three of the "strong men" of the past, sealed their betrayal of the revolution by outright surrender to the foreign concessionaires, amongst whom the oil imperialists are foremost. It is most encouraging that President Cárdenas has not only turned his back on his predecessors' policies on the land and labor questions but in this respect as well.

The cables tell us that 350,000 acres of oil lands under lease to Standard Oil have been reclaimed by the Cárdenas government by outright nationalization. Two million acres in all have now been nationalized, but most of this land was not under lease. This first step toward nationalizing all of Mexico's fabulously valuable oil lands is generally viewed as the initial step in the complete withdrawal of the foreign oil companies, who have an estimated investment of $400,000,000.

Behind the recent cables lies a story, still largely untold, of persistent pressure by Mexico's labor movement for precisely such a government policy. Just one year ago, the powerful Oil Workers' Union demanded a collective contract for the whole industry. After a postponement of the threatened strike, the union finally lost patience by May and pulled out its members. Seventy percent of its demands were granted in June, the balance submitted to the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration.

The commission appointed by the board to hear the case delivered its report in August, and it is this report which lies back of the recent action by President Cárdenas. Among the highlights were the following disclosures: oil profits have been so large (17 percent compared with about 2 percent for American industry as a whole) that the companies were able to recover the whole of their capital investment at least ten years ago. The cost of living in the Mexican oil regions has increased 89 percent since 1934 whereas, in contrast, the real wages of oil workers in the United States increased by 8 percent in the same period. A barrel of Mexican oil represents an investment of 8.60 pesos, while the same barrel of American oil requires a capital investment of 48.12 pesos. The oil companies are in a financial position to increase the wages and social services of their workers by approximately 2600 pesos a year. But they wouldn't raise wages, and soon they won't have to.

## *Facts for Everybody*

IT is common knowledge that American farmers have fared badly since the turn of the century. Higher yields per acre, vastly increased mechanization, and other technological improvements have failed to bring added security to agriculture. This is shockingly illustrated by the debt position of *owner operators*—presumably the backbone of our farming population. Despite the fact that 1,398,881 debt-ridden farmers lost their land during the 1930-35 period, the ratio of mortgage indebtedness to the value of owner-operated farms was 50.2 percent in the latter year. In 1910 this mortgage indebtedness amounted to only 27.3 percent.

Such figures clearly indicate a malady that goes deeper than droughts, business cycles, or lost foreign markets. Though there is no adequate single "explanation," recent disclosures in a "suppressed" Federal Trade Commission report shed light on the problem. At the request of Congress, the commission spent $150,000 investigating monopoly control in the food industry, price spreads, speculation in grain, and other factors that directly affect farm income. A special Senate committee studied the report and ordered it printed.

The Senate Committee on Printing, however, pigeonholed the report, claiming it would cost $127,000 to print. Meanwhile *Facts for Farmers,* a monthly bulletin published by Farm Research, Inc., has succeeded in unearthing the report. From excerpts quoted in the bulletin it is obvious that the whole report should be widely read and studied. Both farmers and urban housewives will be interested to learn, for instance, that in 1913 the farmers got 80 cents out of every dollar the consumer paid for pork, while by 1935 his return was 40 cents. Beef followed a similar course, farmers getting 64 cents of every dollar spent at retail in 1913 and only 40 cents in 1935. Monopoly profits in milk distribution, too, should interest everybody, including a Congress that is preparing to legislate on farm problems.

## *Farm Labor Wages*

THE Bureau of Agricultural Economics is puzzled by a lag in the wages of farm labor. In the last five years

**FACTS ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION—I**

| The Role of Socialist Economy | 1928 | 1936 |
|---|---|---|
| In national income | 44.0 | 99.1 |
| In total output of all industry | 82.4 | 99.8 |
| In total output of agriculture (including individual subsidiary farms of collective farmers) | 3.3 | 97.7 |
| In retail trade turnover | 76.4 | 100.0 |
| In production funds of national economy * | 77.8 | 98.7 |

* Production funds: Agricultural land, forests, industrial buildings, machines, equipment, transport rolling stock, cattle, fertilizers, raw materials, fuel, materials and manufactured articles for supplying production, seeds and fodder. Dwelling houses and buildings used for welfare, social and cultural purposes are not included in the production funds.

The above table clearly illustrates Article 4 of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R., which says: "The economic foundation of the U.S.S.R. is the socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the implements and means of production firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private property in the implements and means of production, and the abolition of exploitation of man by man."

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farm income available for living increased about 200 percent, while hired hands' pay has gone up only 50 percent. Earnings of approximately 2,500,000 men and women are affected. As the bureau puts it:

> For 1937 farm wages average about 72 percent of the 1924-29 level, farm prices 86 percent, and factory wages per employee 99 percent, the weighted average of the latter being 90 percent. Farm wages . . . would have to rise about 25 percent to be in line with the pre-depression relationship.

In another article, which discusses the economic and social status of farm laborers, the bureau reveals their annual earnings as shown by studies in typical counties of eleven states: the corn belt, wheat, cattle, dairy, tobacco, fruit, and cotton regions were included. Yearly rates of pay varied from a $62 average for Negro women cotton pickers to $748 for Orientals in Placer County, Cal. White laborers in Pennsylvania made $347. It should be noted, however, that in many cases other members of the laborer's family contributed to these incomes. Thus the amount available per family member was $163 among the Orientals in California "truck factories." No southern county showed as much as $100 for each member of a family.

Such figures fully explain the tory opposition to any kind of union for these exploited workers. And they show, too, the basic relationship between farm and city labors—the vastly broadened market for industrial goods that waits on higher wages for farm hands. Progressive labor leaders see this clearly, as witness the C.I.O.'s organizing campaign and its Atlantic City resolution calling for the inclusion of agricultural workers in the government's social security program.

# *A People's Front in the Making*

THE actual achievements of labor in the recent municipal and state elections were important and encouraging. But even more important and encouraging were the implications of those results. A good many political commentators have been myopic in their interpretation of the vote. They have evaluated the strength of labor in static rather than dynamic terms. That the American Labor Party of New York doubled its 1936 vote confounded the prophets of reaction. But that which was even more significant—the trend, the direction, the future which that increase unfolded —was largely ignored.

What the election proved about the present political alignment in America was that we are well along the way toward the formation of the American people's front. No longer the abstract plans; now the concrete accomplishment occupies the center of the national stage.

Consider the New York City poll from this point of view. The American Labor Party is now recognized by all as a major political force, holding the balance of power. The resounding defeat of Tammany pushed the A.L.P. forward as the spearhead of progressive political action in the entire state. This is important because the Detroit election showed that a labor spearhead without a popular following larger and more varied than the union memberships alone cannot succeed.

Despite this commanding position, the American Labor Party is an extremely young organization. Its parent body, Labor's Non-Partisan League, was not organized until April 1, 1936, barely more than a year and a half ago. The New York State affiliate of Labor's Non-Partisan League was organized on July 17, 1936. There was scarcely time for local clubs to be formed by the A.L.P. for the 1936 national election. No independent candidates were then put forth by the A.L.P. Although an important role was played in the defeat of Landon and Knox, it could not be said that the A.L.P. had fulfilled its entire function.

Within a single year, the A.L.P. has developed an organization which, despite some shortcomings, is quickly rounding out as an efficient political organism. Candidates for the state assembly and the city council were nominated (and some elected) on a straight A.L.P. ticket. At the same time, the A.L.P. did not separate itself from the mass of progressive voters in respect to the main city offices. Indeed, it contributed the balance of strength in the election of Mayor LaGuardia and his running mates.

This progress in independent political action within the last year is remarkable considering the long tradition of "non-partisanship" in the American trade union movement. Gompersism in politics as well as in unionism is on the way out after but two years of the C.I.O.

The Detroit election illustrates our point negatively. There the labor vote, 154,000, was actually larger, in percentage of total vote, than that in New York. It was far less effective because the issues were placed in too narrow a frame—namely, union labor (chiefly the United Auto Workers) against reaction. Big business, in control of a venal press, successfully blackmailed the middle class because the labor slate had provided no concrete semblance of a working class-middle class alliance. The auto tycoons were aided in their campaign of defamation by Frank X. Martel, president of the Detroit and Wayne County Federation of Labor. This labor "split" further confused and repelled middle-class voters and gave the tories the opportunity to charge that the C.I.O. was out to dominate Detroit politics. The fact that all five labor candidates for the Common Council were closely identified with the United Automobile Workers did not make it easier to counter this type of attack.

Despite these handicaps, the Detroit count was highly encouraging. Had there existed a set-up like the one in New York, reaction would surely have been defeated. In any event, there now exists a solid core of labor-conscious voters large enough to become the driving force of a successful people's-front movement.

And all this in less time than that taken by the New York A.L.P.

Election results elsewhere revealed a similar trend. In Pittsburgh, Mayor Scully, a Democrat running with both C.I.O. and A. F. of L. support, defeated a reactionary Republican. In Clairton, Duquesne, and other Pennsylvania towns, labor-endorsed candidates scored victories. Democratic mayoralty candidates with A.L.P. backing were elected in Buffalo, Troy, and Utica. In Connecticut, a number of progressive combinations based on C.I.O. and A. F. of L. support defeated Republicans.

The 1936 elections indicated trends toward a people's front; the 1937 elections showed those trends coming to fulfillment. The situation within the Democratic Party continues to be extremely fluid. The progressive wing is coming closer to progressive labor, and the reactionary element is heading toward coalition with the Republicans. Labor made so much progress this year because it was in a better position to take advantage of this transitional situation. Only when labor knows its own mind and is organized under its own banner in pursuit of ends dictated by the interests of the productive members of society can it win the support of the middle class. There can be no people's front without a cohesive, self-conscious working-class core. Given such a core, the middle class can be won over. That is the chief lesson of the elections, and the promise of an insurmountable barrier to fascism in America.

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# Haymarket: 1887—1937

***The fiftieth anniversary of a legalized anti-labor lynching party finds the spirit of the heroic defendants marching on***

## By Alan Calmer

*FIFTY years ago this November 11, the Haymarket martyrs were sent to the gallows. In spite of the protest of the entire labor movement, and also of liberals and intellectuals on two continents, they were hanged for a crime they did not commit. Albert Parsons was the outstanding figure in this world-famous labor case. He is the subject of "Labor Agitator," by Alan Calmer, which is being issued by International Publishers in commemoration of these pioneer heroes of the American working class. By arrangement with the publishers, we are printing three selections from this popular biography, together with notes connecting the episodes which follow.*—THE EDITORS.

### I

ALBERT PARSON'S ancestors fought for religious liberty in England and were among the pilgrim fathers of Massachusetts. His parents settled in Alabama, and he was born in the city of Montgomery on June 20, 1848. When he was five years old, his parents moved to the Texas frontier, where he spent his boyhood. At thirteen he fought with the Confederate army, and participated in a number of battles on the southwestern front until the end of the Civil War. During the Reconstruction era, however, he turned "scalawag," and fought for Negro rights. As reaction spread through Texas, he moved to Chicago, arriving in that city at the beginning of the economic crisis of 1873. His experiences during this great depression converted him to the cause of socialism. In the years that followed, he became one of the ablest Socialist organizers and orators of his time. He took part in the numerous factional disputes of the period, until, in the early 1880's he, together with August Spies, became a leader of a Chicago Labor group in which anarcho-syndicalist ideas predominated. These men were revolutionary trade unionists, and played a prominent role in the eight-hour strike movement which reached its height in Chicago on May 1, 1886, and created the international labor holiday. On Monday, May 3, the notorious McCormick massacre occurred, and the next day a protest meeting was held near Haymarket Square. Spies opened the meeting, but sent word to Parsons to join him. The selection which follows describes the events known as the Haymarket affair.

EARLY that morning Parsons returned from a trip to Cincinnati. He had spoken at a large parade and picnic there; it had been a stirring, invigorating affair, and he was in good spirits.

He worked at the newspaper office in the afternoon, with his wife and Mrs. Holmes, assistant editor. Later they went home (they lived on Indiana Street) for supper, and then the three of them, together with Parsons's two children, Albert and Lulu, aged eight and seven, left the house and walked downtown.

Parsons was very cheerful. He walked along buoyantly, telling them stories of his trip and speaking with optimism of the future of their organization.

"Hello, Parsons, what's the news?" someone said. Parsons turned around and recognized two reporters. He was on good terms with some of them; on one occasion he had helped them out of a tight spot when angry strikers, who regarded all newspapermen as stool pigeons, had threatened to beat them up.

Mitchell Siporin

*Albert Parsons*

"I don't know," Parsons said. "I have just returned to town today."

"Going to be a meeting here tonight?" one of them asked.

"Yes, I guess so."

"Going to speak?"

"No, I have another meeting on hand tonight at the *Alarm* office."

"We hear there's going to be trouble tonight," one of the reporters said.

Parsons smiled. "Are you armed for the battle?" he joked.

"No, have you any dynamite on you?" the reporter kidded back.

They all laughed.

"He's a very dangerous-looking man, isn't he?" Mrs. Parsons said, looking fondly at her husband.

THE MEETING at the *Alarm* office lasted until about nine. Just as it was breaking up, someone came running, breathing hard.

"There's a big meeting at Haymarket," he wheezed. "Nobody is over there except Spies. There's an awful big crowd, three or four thousand people. . . . For God's sake, send somebody over. . . Come over, Parsons, and you too, Fielden. . . ."

A whole group decided to go along. When they reached the meeting place, Parsons helped his wife and children and Mrs. Holmes into a nearby wagon, and then pushed his way through the crowd.

Some of the listeners recognized him and started clapping. As soon as Spies caught sight of him, he cut his speech short.

He put his hand out and helped Parsons to the wagon. The street was now packed from sidewalk to sidewalk.

He was still in high spirits, and spoke pleasantly for a little less than an hour, dealing with conditions in the city, telling of experiences on his lecture tours. Only once or twice did he unleash his eloquence.

"Do you know that the military are under arms, and a gatling gun is ready to mow you down?" he said at one point. (A new gatling gun had arrived in the city the day before and the papers hinted it was going to be used against the strikers.) "Is this Germany or Russia or Spain?"

A voice in the crowd: "It looks like it."

"Whenever you demand an increase in pay, the militia and the deputy sheriffs and the Pinkerton men are called out and you are shot and clubbed and murdered in the streets. . . .

"I am not here for the purpose of inciting anybody, but to speak out, to tell the facts as they exist, even though it shall cost me my life before morning. . . .

"In the light of the facts and of your inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it behooves you, as you love your wives and children, if you don't want to see them perish with hunger, killed, or cut down like dogs in the street—Americans, in the interest and protection of your liberty and independence, to arm, to arm yourselves."

Applause. Cries. "We will do it, we are ready now."

Parsons stopped short. He waved his hand back and forth. "No," he cried, "you are not. . . ."

Later, he cautioned the crowd about the same thing. He was talking about the infamous Jay Gould.

"Hang him!" someone snarled.

"No," Parsons replied, "this is not a conflict between individuals, but for a change of system, and socialism desires to remove the causes which produced the pauper and the millionaire, but does not aim at the life of the individual: kill Jay Gould, and like a jack-in-the-box, another or a hundred others like him will come up in his place under the existing social conditions. . . . To kill an individual millionaire or capitalist would be like killing a flea upon a dog. The purpose of socialism is to destroy the dog—the existing system." It was well turned.

While he was speaking he recognized Mayor Harrison in the thick of the crowd. What was he doing there? In the middle of his speech, he saw Harrison leave and move off in the direction of the police station. But when he had nearly finished, he saw Harrison leave again. Apparently he had returned to the meeting.

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It was about ten o'clock when Parsons finished. Fielden was the next speaker. Parsons went back to the ladies. They were chatting, when all of a sudden a sharp wind swept through the wagon. Parsons looked out. Clouds were rolling from the north. It looked as if a thunderstorm was coming up.

Parsons was still in something of a holiday mood. He wanted to get indoors, sit around and talk: it was no use staying there and getting wet.

He made his way back to the speakers' stand.

"Mr. Fielden," he said smoothly, "permit me to interrupt you a moment."

"Gentlemen," he continued, turning to the crowd, "it appears as though it would rain. It is getting late. We might as well adjourn anyway, but if you desire to continue the meeting longer we can adjourn to Zepf's hall on the corner nearby," pointing.

"Never mind," Fielden said, "I will close in a few minutes, and then we will all go home."

The wind grew stronger and it began to drizzle. Parsons and the ladies didn't wait for the meeting to end, but hurried over to Zepf's place.

A large part of the crowd also made for shelter. Only a few hundred stayed to listen. But Fielden was not to be hurried or disconcerted. He kept on.

"Is it not a fact that we have no choice as to our existence, for we can't dictate what our labor is worth? He that has to obey the will of another is a slave. . . ."

It was about twenty minutes before he was through. The crowd was rapidly scattering. "In conclusion," he said at last. . . .

"The police! Look out for the police!"

Fielden stopped, bewildered. A whole army of cops cut through the crowd, stopped a few yards from the wagon. The officer in command stepped out, raised his club and shouted:

"In the name of the people of the state of Illinois, I command this meeting immediately and peaceably to disperse. . . ."

"Why, captain," Fielden said, "this is a peaceable meeting."

The police captain turned around and gave the order to advance.

"All right, we will go," Fielden said, and together with Spies he started to get off the wagon.

There was a whirring sound, something sputtered, a dull red glare whizzed over the crowd, descended—a terrific, blinding explosion shook the street.

"What is that?" Henry Spies shrieked to his brother.

"They've got a gatling gun down there," Spies answered, and started to run. Bullets sailed through the street: the cops were firing madly into the crowd. The spectators, stunned for a moment, now plunged for safety, trampling each other. The street lamps were shattered, everything was in blackness. Henry Spies turned to follow his brother, ran right into a pistol aimed at his brother's back; he lunged for the gun, struggled, felt a stabbing pain, toppled over. Fielden was knocked down by a bullet which hit him just above the knee.

In a few moments it was all over, the firing had stopped. Some of the wounded dragged themselves into doorways, while others lay in the streets, their moans breaking the stillness.

II

THE POLICE immediately began a reign of terror against everyone suspected of being a radical; the bursting of the bomb was a signal for a widespread attempt to exterminate the militant labor movement. Mass arrests and persecution followed. Finally eight leaders—Parsons, Spies and Fielden, Engel, Fischer, and Lingg and Oscar Neebe—were put on trial for murder and conspiracy.

AS the trial got under way and the jury was being picked, it became clear that the cards were stacked against Parsons and his comrades. A special bailiff was appointed to summon possible jurors. "I am managing this case," he boasted in private, "and I know what I am about. These fellows are going to be hanged as certain as death. I am calling such men as the defendants will have to challenge peremptorily and waste their time and challenges. Then they will have to take such men as the prosecution wants."

According to the state law, every person charged with murder was given the right to challenge twenty talesmen without giving any cause. Judge Gary constantly overruled the defense, approving of many candidates, so that scores had to be challenged peremptorily by Captain Black, the defense attorney, and Foster, his assistant.

"It would take pretty strong evidence to remove the impression that I now have," a prospective juror admitted. Immediately the defense challenged for cause. It was overruled by the court. So the candidate had to be challenged peremptorily.

"Your mind is pretty well made up now as to their guilt or innocence?" another was asked. "Yes, sir." Challenged. Overruled.

Judge Gary even qualified a veniremen who said he was related to one of the cops who had been fatally wounded.

After several days of this, Parsons slipped a note to one of the defense attorneys: "In taking a change of venue from Judge Rogers to 'Lord Jeffries,' did not the defendants jump from the frying pan into the fire? Parsons."

He received a despondent nod.

It was not until the middle of July that the jury was finally chosen and sworn. Some of its members admitted their prejudices even on the witness stand.

"I have read and talked about the Haymarket tragedy, and have formed and expressed an opinion. . . . I still believe what I have read and heard, and still entertain that opinion."

"It is evident that the defendants are connected with the Haymarket affair from their being there."

"Have you an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the defendants . . . ?" "I have."

In private the jurors were more emphatic. "If I were on the jury I would hang all the damned buggars," one of them was reported to have said before he was picked. "Spies and the whole damn crowd ought to be hung," said another.

As soon as the jury was selected, prosecuting attorney Grinnell sprang to the attack. His opening remarks made the issue clear. "Gentlemen," he said, with all of the appropriate theatrics, "for the first time in the history of our country people are on trial for

*At the Haymarket Meeting* Mitchell Siporin

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endeavoring to make anarchy the rule. . . .

He called them everything in his vocabulary —assassins, enemies of the state, traitors, conspirators, monsters, vermin. He sketched a dark picture of a dastardly plot hatched to wipe out the whole city—the whole state—the whole country. "These defendants were picked out and indicted by the grand jury," he said. "They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. They are picked out because they are the leaders. Convict them, and our society is safe."

Weeks were spent presenting voluminous evidence, examination and cross-examination flying to and fro until well into August. The hot, stifling courtroom was always packed. Many of the women spectators brought their lunches and stayed all day from 9:30 to 5. Toward the end, Judge Gary opened the galleries of the court for the first time and more spectators jammed into the courtroom.

Even some of Gary's stiff-necked colleagues were shocked by his behavior during the trial. Every day he brought fashionably dressed ladies, including the prosecuting attorney's wife, to sit on the bench with him. Almost touching elbows with him, they came as to a play, whispering to each other, giggling and eating candy.

Gary openly flaunted his bias against the defendants. "It has been decided that for a man to say that he is prejudiced against horse thieves is no ground for imputing to him any misconduct as a juror," he lectured to the jury. "Now you must assume that I know either that anarchists, socialists, and communists are a worthy, a praiseworthy class of people, having worthy objects, or else I cannot say that a prejudice against them is wrong."

During the closing arguments he gave Grinnell an utterly free hand, letting him go as far as he liked with his ferocious, howling accusations, overruling all objections.

"Don't try, gentlemen, to shirk the issue," Grinnell said. "Anarchy is on trial; the defendants are on trial for treason and murder."

Captain Black objected: "The indictment does not charge treason, does it, Mr. Grinell?"

Gary, cynically, waving his hand: "Save the point upon it."

Again: "We stand here, gentlemen," the D.A. roared, "already with the verdict in our favor. . . ."

Black: "There has been no verdict in favor of the prosecution. . . ."

Gary: "Save the point upon it."

On Thursday, August 19, the jurors were instructed to arrive at a verdict.

Early the next morning the sidewalk of the Criminal Court building swarmed with spectators. Heavy guards patrolled the entrance.

The foreman handed two papers to the clerk: "We the jury find the defendants August Spies, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, Albert R. Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, and Louis Lingg guilty of murder in manner and form as charged in the indictment, and fix the penalty at death."

Parsons whistled softly.

The clerk continued: "We find the defendant Oscar E. Neebe guilty of murder in manner and form as charged in the indictment, and fix the penalty at imprisonment in the penitentiary for fifteen years."

Only three hours had been spent by the jury in deciding a case which had taken over a month to present—and a large part of the time was spent in playing cards and singing songs. In fact, it was later admitted that the jury had reached its decision before the closing arguments were made.

III

WITH A DEATH VERDICT against seven of the eight defendants, the defense committee spent long, weary months of legal maneuvering, finally getting a hearing before the Supreme Court, only to have their writ of error denied by Chief Justice Waite. In spite of thousands of petitions and pleas for clemency, the execution was fixed for November 11, 1887. The last moments of the Haymarket martyrs are described in the following selection.

AS the day before execution dawned, there was an explosion in Lingg's cell. He was found slumped on his couch, blood streaming from his mouth. His lower jaw and tongue were blown away, the upper lip and nose torn to shreds, the cheeks badly lacerated. According to the released story, he had lighted a small dynamite cartridge held between his teeth. Frightfully mangled, bleeding steadily for hours, he showed no sign of pain, remaining conscious until his death in the afternoon. Whether it was suicide or murder no one will ever know.

That evening the governor announced his decision: only the sentences of Fielden and Schwab were changed to life imprisonment. (They escaped the gallows; six years later they were pardoned, together with Neebe, by Illinois's progressive governor, John P. Altgeld.)

Late that night the four condemned men still retained their calm composure. Parsons seemed almost happy, singing in his rich, tenor voice an anarchist song called "Marching to Liberty," to the tune of the *Marseillaise*.

He woke at eight the next morning, greeted his comrades cheerfully, washed his face, drank some coffee, and ate fried oysters for breakfast, read the morning papers, then wrote some letters. "Cæsar kept me awake till late at night," he wrote to a friend, "with the noise (music) of hammer and saw, erecting his throne, my scaffold! Refinement! Civilization! . . . Alas, goodbye! Hail the social revolution! Salutations to all."

Later he recited some of his favorite poems from his splendid memory. Conversing with his guard, shortly after, he said: "I am a Mason, and have always tried to help my fellow men all my life. I am going out of the world with a clear conscience. I die that others may live," and he gave the Masonic grip and password.

He spoke for a while to the turnkey about his wife and two children, then sang the *Marseillaise* once more. He refused a glass of wine, but drank some coffee and nibbled at a few crackers. "Now I feel all right," he said. "Let's finish the business."

At eleven-thirty, Sheriff Matson and his assistants marched to murderers' row. Spies listened with his arms folded, his face emotionless, his head bowed slightly, as Matson, his voice trembling, read the death warrant. Then Spies stepped into the corridor, and a thick, leather belt was placed around his chest and his arms pinioned just above the elbows. His hands were then handcuffed behind his back, and his body encased in the white muslin shroud. Fischer and Engel were treated in the same fashion, and then they got to Parsons, who toyed carelessly with his moustache. As his arms were being fastened, he looked up to Fielden in the tier of cells above. "Goodbye, Sam," he said. Some members of the press crowded forward as he was prepared for the gallows. "Won't you come inside?" Parsons said to them with some anger.

They formed a procession and moved somberly along the corridor. The hardboiled reporters and others, assembled in the execution room since six that morning, stopped their jabbering as they heard the sound of feet on the iron stairway. One after another the prisoners appeared, each guarded by a deputy. They reached their positions on the trap and turned toward the spectators.

Their feet were tied and the dangling nooses taken from the hooks. As the rope was slipped over Spies's neck, the noose tightened; the deputy quickly loosened it a bit, and Spies smiled his thanks. Fischer who was taller than his deputy bent his head to help out. Engel accepted the noose as if it were a wreath of honor. Parsons stood there silent, his eyes turned upward, the shroud accentuating his martyr-like appearance.

White caps were put over their heads and faces, and there was a tense quiet.

Suddenly the silence was shattered; the audience looked up startled.

"You may strangle this voice," they heard the clear but subdued tones of Spies from beneath the hood, "but there will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."

The moment his voice dropped, Fischer shouted: *"Hoch die Anarchie!"*

Engel caught it up and roared in his powerful voice: "Hurrah for anarchy!"

"This is the happiest moment of my life," Fischer ended.

"Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America?" Parsons shouted; then lowering his voice: "Let me speak, Sheriff Matson." The deputy behind Parsons stepped back, leaving the trap clear. As though beginning a speech, Parsons's voice rose:

"O men of America, let the voice of the people be heard! O . . ."

But the man in the sentry box, hidden to the spectators, had already slashed the rope, and the four bodies shot down, twisted and contorted, the chests heaving, the legs kicking convulsively, the necks blue-white. . . .

Parsons had remained an agitator to the last.

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# Duke, What Made You Smell So Bad?

*An open letter to the former king of England by a contemporary who started working at the same age*

## By Michael Gold

DEAR DUKE: You don't know me from a slug of Scotch, but since millions of other Americans are in the same fix, I'm not downcast, but go on daily doing my best, anyhow, to lead the full life. The Duchess must have told you a little about us people. Yes, we're a queer lot, and you'll never understand us, so don't try too hard.

I want to warn you about something serious, Duke. There's a plot afoot to cheapen, humiliate, and even *destroy* you.

I have a sneaking liking for you, Duke. We are about the same age. Just about the time you were thirteen and were being made colonel of the Guards, I was going to work in a fierce gas-mantle factory on the Bowery. This has been a lifelong bond between us.

I always felt protective toward you. Even then I could see you didn't know how to take care of yourself, but I had learned it soon. You're still a kid at heart, you've never grown up. That look in your eyes still says, what's it all about, why won't they leave me alone to play my drums?

You were happy in the night-clubs, then they kicked you up on the throne. I used to enjoy hearing about your adventures in the hot spots. Why did they try to force you to be serious? It's not been a success; you're still a trap drummer and happy ham at heart, aren't you? Gosh, man, politics is not your dish. It's no use bluffing. Politics bores and baffles you, you want your drums; you were born to be a drummer in a jazz-band, I know, and I think you ought to take a firm stand.

And now for the low-down as to the plot. Duke, it will shock you. You don't read anything, or bother about public affairs; you leave that to your valets and managers. But do you know what they're doing? They're trying to make a Führer out of you! You wriggled out of that king business in time, but this is worse.

Why did they drag you off to Germany? You were having a good time in that Austrian castle, with those jolly side-trips to Paris, weren't you? You didn't want to inspect any dull, noisy Nazi factories, did you? But they made you do it; they told you it would make you popular.

It was a lie. They were using you, Duke. Maybe you've never heard of fascism. It's a new political trick to save capitalism. The wise guys think they can reshuffle the old deck and fool the people in a new way. They used to do it with a king; now they need a Führer, some sort of gaudy jazz-man who can keep the people's mind off their troubles.

And they've picked you for the job. They took advantage of your youth, your easy-going habits, and the fact that you never read the papers. So they took you for a ride to Germany. They told you to be polite to Hitler, to lift your arm in the Nazi salute, and to act as if you really enjoyed meeting all those fat Nazi fairies. You did it like a good boy, because they said it would make you popular with labor. What a laugh!

Didn't you know that British and American labor hate Hitler and his Nazis? Really, Duke, it's an open secret, and you should have read the papers now and then.

Did Wally have a hand in it? I hate to talk about a man's wife to him, Duke, and I know you love her. But I'd advise you to hire a private detective to follow her around for a while and see whether she really loves *you*. Lots of people in America and England believe she has a crush on Ribbentrop and anything else in a Nazi uniform. She's been seen coming out of Nazi haylofts with a ruffled, absent-minded air which is, of course, only circumstantial evidence, but Hauptmann was burned for less.

As for Charles Bedaux, who was managing your affairs in America, he was in the plot, too. You see, Duke, this is the guy who invented the "stretch-out" system, a device for sweating labor in the textile mills and other places. The American workers know him well, and hate his guts. Even William Green hates him, and Bill is slow about hating bosses. It is really a bad case, and if you wanted to make yourself popular with American workers, you should have chosen as manager somebody who was better liked—Tom Girdler, for instance, or Ralph Easley.

What a mess you're in, young feller. Nothing but miscarriages all along the road. This Bedaux, by the way, may be a good drinking partner when he's around you. That's because he wants to please you. With other people, he's just one of those little pug-dog Napoleons. One of our smart newspaper girls, Dorothy Bromley, has told of a party at which this Bedaux bragged like the pug-dog he is. He said you were his sucker. He claimed he was going to use your popularity to make you Führer of Britain, and then he'd be the power behind the throne. He thinks you're a dope, but he shouldn't have advertised it, Duke. Such things do not help you keep your popularity.

Eastwood

Yes, yes, I believe you. You are not a Nazi, you're just a big-hearted, glad-handing friend of the common man, a sort of Jimmy Walker of the British Isles. I repeat, I like you, I believe every word you say, but why do you smell so strongly of Nazi skunk? Is it our fault if we have noses? You merely paid a friendly visit to Hitler, you explain, so why should people make such a fuss about it? Why were they going to boo you when you arrived in America? Bedaux will explain and explain, and the advertising agency he engaged to make you as popular as Ex-Lax will also explain it, but it just won't do any good. It's the smell, Duke. A guy confers with a skunk, and then he wonders why people avoid him. Good Lord, Duke, are you naïve?

Anyway, Duke, watch your step. Hire that private dick I suggested, and find out what it's all about. You are being played for a sucker of some sort. I hated to tell you all this bad news, but we were boys together, you in the palace, me on the Bowery, and I think I understand Your Highness. You have an awful lot of time and money on your hands, but no occupation. Duke, why not start a new Broadway night-club if you do get here? It would positively be the biggest thing in America. We'd all drop in to shake your hand. You could play the trap drums and jazz the pretty girls. You'd be more popular than Jack Dempsey.

Duke, you've come to another great crossroads in your life. Maybe you have a secret yen to be a great Führer. I don't know. If you have, drop it. It's a bad job. All these Führers will surely hang some day. Crime looks easy, but it doesn't pay. Duke, I feel certain you will pick the drums. Nobody ever hanged a good drummer. Think fast, pal; or a hundred advertising agencies won't dry-clean that skunk smell in time. People might have rotten-egged you in America, by all the signs. Alack, alas! Try to think!

Anxiously, your bounder friend,
MIKE GOLD.

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# READERS' FORUM

***Some light on Eugene Lyons, "a lifelong revolutionist" —Proposed civil liberties bills and more on the C.C.C.***

TO THE NEW MASSES:

An incident I witnesed in Moscow in the summer of 1929 should shed some light on Eugene Lyons, "a lifelong revolutionist," as he described himself when he went to the Soviet Union as United Press correspondent. I had known him in America, and on my arrival in Moscow I had the pleasure of giving him some news. Of this he writes in his book: "I learned with a shock that hurt more than I care to acknowledge that I had already been ostracized by my former comrades in New York. . . . But the instinct of my former friends was correct. They had smelled out the waning of my beliefs."

I was curious to know how he smelled to the authorities in Moscow, and I asked him. In his book he writes of that summer, "The Press Department in Moscow reckoned me among the friendly correspondents." To me he complained that the Press Bureau "treated me no better than any bourgeois correspondent."

That evening I asked a man, who was in position to answer, how Lyons was regarded in government circles. An expression of distaste crossed the man's face. "Anything specific?" I asked. "Well, among other things, the gentleman uses his American dollars for some profitable but illegal speculation in rubles." "Does he know you know?" I asked. "Not yet." "I'd like to see his face when he finds out," I said. "All right, tell him."

The next time Lyons complained how Soviet authorities did not appreciate him I told him. He looked suddenly sick. Then he said, "Well, if it weren't for bootleg rubles an American couldn't live *decently* in Moscow."

New York. JOSEPH GOLLOMB.

## *For Increased Civil Liberties*

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Congressman Bernard is wholly right in his suggestion that a definite comprehensive program should be drawn up and pushed by progressives, whatever their particular slant or interests.

The American Civil Liberties Union has for some years pushed a program of bills in Congress on which coöperation by all liberal and working-class organizations has been sought. That program covers:

1. Bills to increase freedom on the radio by requiring all stations in return for a free franchise from the government to set aside a certain portion of time daily for public use on educational programs. All stations would be required, if putting on one side of a controversial issue, to give equal facilities to at least one other side, as is now provided for candidates to public office. Stations would be obliged to keep a public record of all applications for time refused as well as granted. Stations would be relieved of liability for slander suits for utterances made on public time in order to eliminate station censorship of manuscripts, based on fear of legal action.

Radio is the biggest single issue of free speech. These bills are the most important of all proposals for freedom at the point where public opinion is most quickly and powerfully influenced.

2. A bill to take away from the single censor in the post office department the power to exclude from the mails matter which he regards as obscene or seditious, and place it in the hands of the courts where experience shows much fairer judgments. Already in the customs service for some years the determination of what matter from abroad shall be excluded has been left to judges and juries, which far better reflect current standards of obscenity and sedition than the opinions of a bureaucratic official.

3. A bill to reëstablish the American right of political asylum for refugees from foreign tyrannies by providing for the admission and stay of persons who can show that they would be victims of persecution if returned to their native lands. The bill would thus set aside for such persons the present restrictions in the immigration and deportation laws.

4. A bill to authorize the federal government to act in lynching cases where states fail to act, and require indemnities from communities to the families of victims lynched.

5. A bill to fix penalties for any federal official violating the rights of any citizens, as guaranteed by the federal Constitution, and a similar bill of more doubtful constitutionality, providing for penalties for citizens who violate the civil rights of others.

6. A bill to permit the people of Puerto Rico to determine their status in relation to the United States—whether independence, statehood, or the continuance of the status quo.

7. Bills for civil government to replace navy rule in American Samoa and Guam.

New York. ROGER N. BALDWIN, *Director*,
American Civil Liberties Union.

## *The Army Still Educates the C.C.C.*

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The Chicago *Tribune* is always telling us how President Roosevelt "nurses a sense of crisis"—dramatizes domestic and foreign dangers for his own personal glorification as a prelude to some hellish collectivistic dictatorship he has up his sleeve. This will be news to the civilian employees of the C.C.C., who have been trying to get the President's ear long enough to get him a little excited about the very definite "crisis" that besets their organization.

Unfortunately, the President seems to be sold, hook, line, and sinker, on the army's "moral leadership" of the C.C.C.—including C.C.C. education. As I indicated in a previous NEW MASSES article [August 3], the President could easily have exercised his executive authority when the C.C.C. was reorganized in August to declare C.C.C. education and the personnel thereof an agency free and independent of the army. But he didn't d it. Many protests were sent to him—whether they reached him or not is another story.

Mr. Robert Fechner, civilian director of the corps, called a meeting of the nine corps-area educational advisers (civilian educational directors) in Washington early in August. He announced that separation of the army and C.C.C. education was about to be consummated. The overjoyed educational advisers proceeded to make rosy plans for an educational program free of brass hats and military interference. In the meantime Mr. Fechner was closeted with War Department and other officials. Days passed and then rumors were heard that negotiations had hit a snag—the army wasn't so anxious to be removed as it had let on to be. The War Department clung tenaciously to its prerogatives as fiscal agent for the C.C.C. They held out for the power to handle all traveling-expense money—a small matter on the face of it, but sufficiently important to hold a whip hand over the entire organization. Mr. Fechner, with his usual gentle compassion for army whims, made an effort to see things from the army point of view—and succeeded. As a result he finally came out with the announcement that "insuperable technical obstacles" blocked the proposed change and that the status quo would have to be maintained at least until the end of the present fiscal year (June 30, 1938).

By the time this decision had been reached, the President was too immersed in other problems to be amenable to any plans for revamping the C.C.C.

Congressman John T. Bernard's bill to remove the army from the C.C.C. altogether and place the corps under a civilian board was of course washed out by the early adjournment of Congress. Within the C.C.C. itself, the army's method of "selective breeding" has brought results. Now almost no civilians remain who are not willing to play the army's game.

In a letter to your Reader's Forum, issue of September 21, Mr. James R. Steele of Seattle gave some very interesting sidelights on the C.C.C. situation—obviously from first-hand experience. He spoke of the "pro-army servile tools in the upper reaches of the educational division." He didn't name any names, but in my opinion he put his finger squarely on the reason why all efforts to divorce the army and the C.C.C. education have been unsuccessful. There is no doubt whatsoever that if one-tenth of the civilian employees who confided their criticisms of the army to terrified whispers had come out openly in one thundering protest things would have had to happen. Because it is not "agitators" and "radicals" alone who chafe under the army's idea of education—C.C.C. educators of all political hues have bitter complaints, on different grounds perhaps, but most of them legitimate and demonstrable.

But these men have become weary of the struggle. They see complaint after complaint go to Washington—causing not even a ripple in the placid bureaucratic waters.

This entire question simply must become the concern of all American educators regardless of their political affiliations. They must be given the facts so long suppressed. With these facts they can draw their own conclusions. I feel certain that *no* American is willing to allow the U. S. army to encroach on the constitutional rights of American citizens—to allow the army to set up a permanent system of martial law over the large group of young American civilians represented by the members of the Civilian Conservation Corps—both enrollees and supervisory personnel. No person in his right mind can maintain that the army is qualified to handle one of America's largest educational assignments. We wouldn't permit the average army reserve officer, with his limited educational background, to teach even our grammar schools—why should we permit him to rule the body and mind of full-grown young men thrown by force of circumstances into an organization which is supposed to be "civilian" in character.

Something must be done. We cannot allow the alarums and excursions here and abroad to divert our attention from this basic problem. Right now the army is having things its own way in the C.C.C.—more so than ever. Their "men of excellent character" mythology and the "Rover boys in olive drab" idea with which they seek to glorify the lot of unemployed American youth — possible future storm troopers and obedient cannon fodder—must be given a setback.

Organized protests should again be sent to the President and to the various senators and congressmen. The issue should be revived again at the special session of Congress. Mr. Robert Fechner should be queried very closely on his reasons for permitting the status quo to continue. We must insist that he go through with his announced plan to separate the army and C.C.C. education. That can be done now in spite of the razzle-dazzle of "technicalities" the gentleman has pulled out of his bag.

This is the immediate goal. Eventually, Congressman Bernard's excellent bill to demilitarize the C.C.C. altogether should be given a full hearing. Now let us at least hold Mr. Fechner to his promise to emancipate the C.C.C. educational program.

ALBERT DAHLQUIST,
Formerly Supervisor, Headquarters Second Corps Area, C.C.C., Governors Island, New York.

Chicago, Ill.

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# REVIEW AND COMMENT

***The life story of Thomas Benton—The fight for civil rights—German expatriates and lyric Americana***

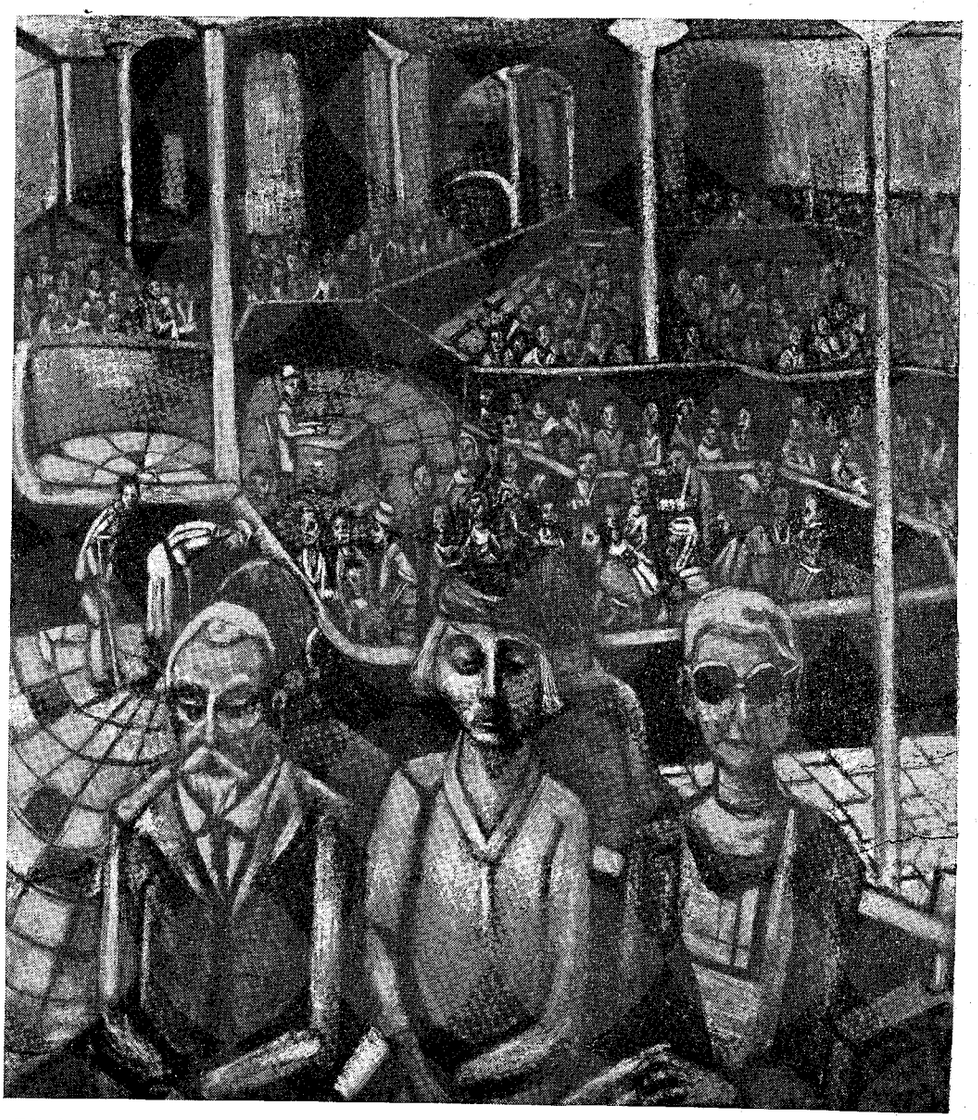
IN recent years a good sized movement has grown up among American artists, concerned with the contemporary social scene. The movement is not uniform, but consists of many trends, styles, and influences ranging all the way from the trenchant representation of class conflicts in Gropper, Joe Jones, and Quirt to the more "reticent realism" of Curry, Benton, and Grant Wood. If we include certain works of such artists as Biddle, Blanch, Picken, Ribak, Reff, and others, the extent and significance of the movement will be obvious. Of course, other tendencies continue as heretofore. The abstractionists and the academicians are still actively at work: the geometric and the pubic triangles will not disappear from art for a long time to come. However, viewed in historic perspective, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the plastic interpretation of common social experience in the native environment constitutes the mainstream of contemporary American art. The appearance of Benton's autobiography* is, therefore, of immediate importance for an understanding of what is happening in American art, more especially since such an understanding (let alone profound analysis) is seldom furnished by current art criticism.

Benton tells in graphic and abundant detail the story of his childhood and early youth passed in the little hilltown of Neosho, Mo., in the dense political atmosphere of his father's home which extended its hospitality to many visitors, among them such big-wigs as Champ Clark and William Jennings Bryan. Benton, Jr., deceived his father's expectations and turned early to art. At sixteen he was official artist of the Joplin *American*. But his real art education began in 1907 when he entered the Chicago Art Institute. Here he absorbed at once the bohemian pose and manners then in fashion. From Chicago Benton went direct to Paris where, following the formula universally esteemed by the art students of Spain, Russia, Germany, and the rest of the world, he got himself a "sleeping dictionary," drank and argued, and imbibed the latest æsthetic isms together with his *apéritif*. After three years of it he returned to New York to find Paris transplanted to Manhattan. The sum and substance of his art education up to the war, viewed from the standpoint of a penitent intellectual, was loose bohemianism in personal behavior and æsthetic purism in creative practice.

Benton's recovery from this double malady came in several stages. It began with his service in the navy during the World War when he was put to sketching *actual things,* ships, dredges, buildings, for use of the architects; it continued with his post-war stay in Martha's Vineyard where he observed, studied, and recorded the characteristics of *actual people* among the sturdy local population. The final step in his return to sanity from the rarefied atmosphere of æstheticism divorced from life was his visit home at his dying father's bedside, where the renewal of acquaintance with the home folk made him realize the great possibilities for American art in American life.

For some ten years thereafter Benton traveled through the United States; through Georgia and Louisiana, through Ohio and Pennsylvania, through Texas and Arkansas. He went into shipyards, oil fields, cotton fields, steel mills, coal mines. This direct contact with American life at these many points formed the material of his drawings, easel paintings, and murals. Such is the skeleton of Benton's narrative; but it is not all narrative. Benton's autobiography really consists of two parts, not arbitrarily divided and yet distinct one from the other. The major (and in all respects superior) part is a record of Benton's personal observation and experience among the vast masses of democratic America, told simply and with gusto. The smaller part deals with theory and is prolix, sententious, reactionary. Benton's excursions into social theory (whether in or out of the book) practically always assume the following pattern: a current notion is trotted out, embroidered in highly involved language which, when pierced, exposes some popular prejudice, generally a plea for acquiescence in the status quo.

Here is a typical (but by no means the worst) example. Benton notes that the deplorable situation of the southern Negro makes him a willing recruit to Marxist doctrine. This, Mr. Benton thinks, is very unfortunate. "Quite apart from the matter of social justice involved in Marxist doctrine, it is, or has been, devoted technically to violence in acquiring that justice." The young Negro accepts Marxism as his ancestor accepted Baptism—blindly. But the southern whites, mistaking such Ne-



***Clinic***

Painting by Tschachasov (Whitney Museum)

*AN ARTIST IN AMERICA, *by Thomas Hart Benton. Robert M. McBride & Co.* $3.75.

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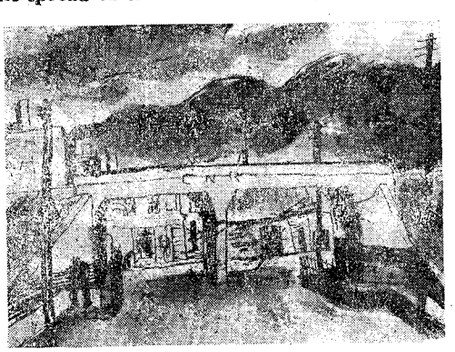
groes for real revolutionaries are likely "to slaughter a lot of poor black boys who are simply enjoying the emotional values of a new religion." When this happens, the Marxists "will have evacuated," leaving the Negroes to their fate. Therefore, the Marxists are doing a "vile thing."

Here we have all in a row fiction, innuendo, plain slander; to wit: that the Negro is a bundle of emotions incapable of independent thought (when Langston Hughes, Angelo Herndon, and so many others cry out in refutation); that Marxism is committed to violence (when the violence cited by Benton himself should prove the southern bourbons the ones "devoted technically" to it); that the Negro's assertion of his humanity is due to the white Marxists (as if Negroes—and other oppressed races—were not slaughtered wholesale for that very assertion before Marx was ever born); that the Marxists are cowards (when abundant records show that they are in the thick of every fight for national equality). You understand? The lynchers' answer to the demand for elementary justice is tar and feathers, rope and faggot; but it is the people who ask for justice that are "vile." Pretty stale stuff, Uncle Tom!

Having warmed up to it, Mr. Benton proceeds to play havoc with the class struggle by the simple expedient of retailing a pointless anecdote. In ten years of travel, among workers of every kind, Benton comes across—and duly records—an immense amount of whoring, but the class struggle successfully eludes him.

Fortunately for the reader, this sort of "theory" forms a very small portion of the book. It ends on a note of optimism. Disgusted with the large cities ("The great cities are dead"), Benton has returned to the bosom of his native state. There is hope for art in the smaller settlements, especially of the West and Middle West. And there is hope, too, from another direction. "The age of raging greed is past." Benton is settled in Kansas City, but if he ever gets tired of it, he can always, as he says, pick up his car and drive out into the backwoods. That is undoubtedly a comforting solution for an artist after the completion of a sixteen-thousand-dollar job, and more coming. But the solution is slightly oversimplified. And the great cities have been buried a little prematurely. Historically, the cities have always been the chief centers (Athens, Rome, Florence, Paris) in the progress of the arts and the spread of civilization. And what about the artists who cannot escape into the backwoods? The Marxists will get them if Mr. Benton does not watch out. LOUIS LOZOWICK.



John Lonergan

### *The Good Fight*

LET FREEDOM RING, *by Arthur Garfield Hays. Horace Liveright.* $2.50.

NO TIME could be more opportune than the present for the reissue, after ten years and with important additions, of such a book as that of Mr. Hays. Not that the civil rights of the people of the United States are in more parlous straits now than heretofore, though the struggle for them is sharpening day by day, but rather that there is a more deeply awakened consciousness of the need to fight, to enlarge, and even to maintain these rights than we have witnessed at least since before the World War. Publication of books such as this and study of the situations, many of them already historical, with which it deals are welcome needling along this line to the progressives.

For many years Mr. Hays has wandered about the battlefield for freedom, constantly sniping at the enemy. Often, as this book of personal reminiscence shows, his path led through the mere byways and fringes of that front. Often, as in the Sacco-Vanzetti case, memory of which cannot be refreshed too often by a people loving liberty; in the Dr. Sweet case in Detroit; in the Jennings case in Pennsylvania; the most recent atrocities in Puerto Rico, his path has followed the main highway of the struggle for the people's rights. These are vital parts of the history of American democracy. Mr. Hays has played some part in all of these, and presents the issues judiciously, the story dramatically and with journalistic competence.

It might be said that the fight against the smut-hounds, Sumner and his brothers, is not nearly as vital a part of this struggle as such issues as I have enumerated above. But its inclusion in this book has a special value. The people of the stage, the press, see in the old *American Mercury* "hatrack" case, the Mary Ware Dennett case, the case of "The Captive," illustrations proper to remember as examples of the indiscriminate attacks against all culture by reaction not only in Germany and Italy, but in our own United States.

Probably the most important matters in proportion to their quality of being little-known, in this personal case-book, are the contemporary cases of Emerson Jennings, liberal-progressive printer of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and of the massacre at Ponce, Puerto Rico, last Palm Sunday. Inclusion of these cases, in most abbreviated manner, makes one wish that Mr. Hays had written a whole new book on these and other contemporary issues, rather than have tried to squeeze them as he has done within the covers of an old one in a new edition. Perhaps he will yet do so, adding a volume more to the present one, and to *Trial by Prejudice,* which came between its two editions. Incidentally, much of the author-prejudice which mingled with that of its subject in the middle volume has been eliminated in this one. There are no attacks simultaneously on prosecution and defense.

The book gains and loses by its quality of personal reminiscence. It gains in intimacy. It loses in material. The reader is carried through Mr. Hays's participation, sometimes central and sometimes peripheral, in many cases. He fails, by contrast, always to get the whole picture of what the case was all about, the fullness of the illuminating, ghastly facts.

Last May, the Commission of Inquiry on Civil Rights in Puerto Rico, of which Mr. Hays was chairman and the only continental member, published its condensed report of findings. It was seventy big pages long. It was published in an edition limited to a few hundred copies, and never given public circulation in its entirety. In twenty-six pages of the present book is a condensation of much the same material. One could wish for much more to be brought quickly before the public eye in books as well as in magazine articles, for there are no more civil rights in Governor Blanton Winship's Puerto Rico in November than there were in May.

I don't intend these remarks so much as a criticism of Mr. Hays as a plea for more of the same that he has given here, even though there are some "plague on both your houses" passages with which I disagree completely. There is enough drama in the fight for civil and democratic rights to attract any reader. The fight is basic, important, and it is imperative that more and more should be attracted. VITO MARCANTONIO.

### *Nazi Exiles on the Way*

LOST HERITAGE, *by Bruno Frank. Viking Press.* $2.50.

THE BURIED CANDELABRUM, *by Stefan Zweig. Viking Press.* $2.50.

THE main interest in these novels lies in the revelation of their authors' developments. Previous to 1933, Frank held to a vague humanitarianism that was so broad as to include a sympathetic approach to figures such as Frederick the Great (*Days of the King, Trenck*). At the same time, he excoriated "American" technics and Russia's dictatorship of the proletariat. In *Politische Novelle,* he argued that Europe could be saved only if it managed to prevent the intrusion of American and "Asiatic" patterns. The groping stage of his social humanism was reflected in his choice of transitional situations in which highly symbolic characters drifted about in Quixotic doubt.

In this novel, Bruno Frank treats the direct present. Nazism rouses a German prince from his royal formalism. He detaches himself from his ancestral traditions and consents to lead a "revolutionary" group aiming to overthrow Hitlerism—in favor of some benevolent monarchy. In the course of his efforts, the prince is awakened to the human values in the middle and working classes. This is a

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long step from Frank's former mythical idealism. Yet, this work shows that he is still very much on the way. (The German title of this novel is *Der Passport.*) Not that we think the choice of a prince as an anti-Nazi symbol to be completely unfortunate, as some critics have maintained. The German royalty, to be sure, has found it more convenient to support than to oppose Hitler. But to us, Frank's prince, who turns from pure æstheticism to passionate admiration of Goya's social orientation points to the "realm" of the artist and his development. The limitation of the novel appears rather in the technique and process of the story. It is a story of "away from" without the coördinates that might help chart the "going toward." Frank's prince abandons his dead past, but thereafter wanders about in vain search for a home. His rebirth manifests itself mainly in somewhat idiosyncratic acts, directed toward saving his old teacher from the concentration camp. Throughout, the prince operates as an isolated individual. Hence Frank is forced to have recourse to miraculous accidents in detailing the prince's escape, the liberation of his teacher, and the "happy ending" in London, where he meets the daughter of a Jewish antique dealer who had been driven to death by the Nazis. The last sections, in which Frank pays glowing panegyrics to "free, law-governed" England, to its logic, "wonderfully English" (page the Non-Intervention Committee) are almost embarrassing reading today. On the other hand, one can appreciate all this as the relief of a harassed refugee, coming from a world "of spooks and witches, horror and malice and burning pain, pale as death, streaming with fresh blood," as an expression of momentary gladness at seeing "a bit of blue heaven or green earth."

A similar temper is discernible in Stefan Zweig's more symbolic *The Buried Candelabrum.* It is a short, lyrical narrative built around the legend of the seven-branched menorah. Its Ahasuerian pilgrimages, in the course of which it falls into foreign hands, are directly pointed toward the stormy fate of messianic Judaism. When, in the fifth century, vandals capture the sacred emblem, the helpless Jews do not resist. "We Jews are no fighters. Sacrifice alone is our strength." Yet, this post-1933 work contains hidden questionings as to the wisdom of this, Zweig's long-cherished persuasion. HARRY SLOCHOWER.

### *Father and Son*

TIME OF OUR LIVES: THE STORY OF MY FATHER AND MYSELF, *by Orrick Johns. Stackpole Sons.* $3.

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strongly opinionated. Even as a cub on the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch,* that crusading sheet which he later edited for many years, George Sibley Johns was not inclined to pull his punches. He was an implacable and resourceful foe of the powerful trusts, and battled incessantly against dishonest elections, franchise steals, and other public iniquities which supplied targets for journalists of the muckraking era.

Orrick Johns and his father were comparative strangers for a great many years, and have never been able completely to reconcile their views. Having lost a leg in an accident, Orrick became a studious and evidently introspective youth, though with dogged courage and persistence he managed to overcome his physical disability. He landed a job with William Marion Reedy, editor of the *Mirror,* a publication that fostered Edgar Lee Masters, Sara Teasdale, Witter Bynner, and many other writers who subsequently extended their audiences.

Having attained some recognition as a poet, Orrick made his way to Greenwich Village, where his circle of acquaintances soon included almost everybody of consequence in the literary world. Here were gathered other young refugees from the culturally sterile farm lands of the Middle West; here they felt free to worship beauty without being considered squirrely by prosaic neighbors.

But Orrick Johns, unlike some of his contemporaries, was never an idle playboy devoting all his time to art. He worked steadily. He concerned himself with the struggles of labor. His father, though he believed that Socialists were entitled to a hearing, had no use for them, and sought to discourage his son's burgeoning interest in socialist ideas. Through the book, the author seems to imply that the father was ever the wiser and more steadfast man. Steadfast he may have been, but of Sacco and Vanzetti he said: "They're both guilty as hell! Not only of murder, but they were damned foreign agitators."

Orrick's feeling, as he realizes, was ever deeper than his scientific knowledge.

> There are two ways to study [he writes]. One is the cool, deliberate system of acquiring and retaining facts, and the fixed deductions from these facts, which I think is the method of many educators and professors. The other method is a passionate, wild, adventurous experience, in which every discovery is enough to inebriate the student. Mine has been the last method, an absurdly wasteful method, but more like a love affair than a mere burning of the lamp.

It was in this spirit that Johns, after a sojourn in Europe ending with the economic collapse of 1929, joined a Communist demonstration. It was like the proletarian novel "conversion" ending for which our novelists are always being lambasted. But it was not an ending for the poet who after serious thought joined the party and for several years served it devotedly and ably. He was for a time an editor of the NEW MASSES. He left it to be-

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come a supervisor of the W.P.A. Writers' Project. The object of rehabilitating indigent writers was an admirable one, and Johns tackled his task with enthusiasm. He was soon bogged down in departmental red tape and assailed by Red-baiters. And then an intellectually-bent sailor, who wished to become a writer by virtue of a job on the project and who had been denied the privilege by Johns, planned vengeance on the man who had thwarted his ambition. He ambushed Johns at a party, knocked him cold, poured whiskey over him, and set fire to his clothes. After he was discharged from the hospital, Johns resigned for the dual purpose of easing pressure on his superior in Washington, whom he admired, and of protesting against the dismissal of personnel.

*Time of Our Lives* is a sprightly, readable chronicle, imbued with a goodly measure of the easy grace that made Orrick Johns one of the most notable lyric poets of the pre-war revival. For the most part the story is related with impressive candor and obvious sincerity. Though he is no longer a member of the Communist Party, the author's attitude toward it is entirely friendly. He quit, he says, because life in his party unit became "increasingly dry, dull, and repetitious." He also deplores "the habit of exaggerating and coloring with violence the acts and motives of all people who were not with us." Two years or so ago the Communists were predicting just such steps as the fascist nations are now taking; two years ago they were accused of exaggeration. There is also a hollow sound to the following: "Comrade Ivan [a rather unusual name for an American Communist] may possibly be right in the end, but it is impossible to see eye to eye with him in everything—for instance in regard to Brahms's first symphony in C-minor." I doubt if many party functionaries would spend much time seriously debating a comrade's taste in music. At least, the comrade might, if his ardor were strong enough, dispute the criticism. This seems, then, to be the utterance of a tired man seeking a reason for his weariness and inactivity. It recalls Floyd Dell's message of withdrawal from the battle front: ". . . As an artist I felt the wish to detach myself from the immediate and daily anxieties of the situation, and to renew my contacts with the ageless and timeless aspects of nature, which afford a deep refreshment to the restless mind." This inclination can be understood and even regarded with sympathy, but it should not be attributed to a false reason.

"I very sincerely believe, however," writes Johns, "that Comrade Ivan owns the future. I am with him more often than with anybody else I know."

Johns saw fascism in operation in Italy, and hated it with all the strength of his sensitive nature. The bombers of Guernica and the invaders of Shanghai are not idle; the future which belongs to Comrade Ivan may be shadowed and postponed a long time unless

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### *Playing and Singing America*

THE AMERICAN PLAY-PARTY SONG, WITH A COLLECTION OF OKLAHOMA TEXTS AND TUNES, *by Benjamin Albert Botkin. Lincoln, Nebraska.*

WHEN America plays and sings, it can be realistic, it also can arrive at good poetry. There has been sentiment in this land of ours, and a lot of songs about Sweet Adelines. But when Americans get good and ready they can see with a mean and realistic eye, and sing of what they see. The following lines from Mr. Botkin's book are from a play-party song of Garvin County, Okla.:

Whoop law, Lizzie, pore gal,
Whoop law, Lizzie Jane,
Whoop law, Lizzie, pore gal,
She died carryin' the ball and chain.
*Doggone!*

The fact that Americans could use the words quoted for purposes of collective gayety indicates the staggering diversity and contradictory possibilities of the American mind.

People from all over some rural territory would come together in some large room. You didn't have to be invited. And these American folk would play the play-party, that is, a dramatization to a song known by the participants. The play-party song is of many kinds, all of which are to be found in the present work.

Some of the play-party songs are downright junk. Some are mad. Some are rowdy. Some are simply dull. And some show the anonymous or impersonal or collective American mind at top form—that is, clear and rich, profound and speedy, musical and accurate.

There is "Nellie Gray." Offhand, it looks like some sweetly appealing composition. But the syllables are arranged naturally and artfully; and what is more, despite all their sweetness, they deal with life in the South not just in terms of the old plantation or the handsome colonel. Whites sang the following lines as far south as Oklahoma City:

One night I went to see her, but "she's gone" the neighbors say,
"The white man hath bound her with his chain,
They have taken her to Georgia for to wear her life away
And she's toiled in the cotton and the cane."

Sometimes the high points of these play-party songs take on a form as neat and delicately resonant as that of Herrick. But, most often, when these songs get places, they are mean and kind of lowdown. There is also the earthy madness of:

Bile dem cabbage down.
Bile dem cabbage down.

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I tell you gals dere's no use foolin',
And bile dem cabbage down.

In all that mass of rowdiness, beauty, sentiment, cruelty, confusion, dullness, simple madness, and realism that make up the play-party songs of America, one line perhaps sums it all up, as far as America is concerned:

Hind wheel off, and the axle draggin'.

ELI SIEGEL.

### *Brief Review*

ASCARIS: THE BIOLOGIST'S STORY OF LIFE, *by Richard Goldschmidt. Prentice-Hall.* $3.25.

This is a lucid, informative, and entertainingly presented account of animal life. The author, an eminent authority on the mechanism of sex determination, uses a dissection of the lowly parasitic worm Ascaris as a means for presenting to the lay reader a sketch of the general fundamentals of animal biology and an application of these fundamentals to a wide variety of organisms ranging from the amœba to man. Dr. Goldschmidt's humor is forced at times, and we may question the omission of the plant kingdom from what purports to be the story of the whole of life; but these faults are slight, and compensation for them will be found in the relatively large amount of excellent descriptions of actual research methods used by the biologist to obtain his results. G. G.

### *Two Anniversary Issues*

SOVIET RUSSIA TODAY, November. 15c.

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LABOR DEFENDER, November. 15c.

Commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Haymarket meeting and the tenth anniversary of Sacco-Vanzetti. Features an article by the widow of Albert Parsons, excerpts from the two famous trials, and an article by Governor Benson of Minnesota.

★

### *Recently Recommended Books*

*Little Golden America,* by Ilya Ilf and Eugene Petrov. Farrar & Rinehart. $2.75.

*Bread and Circuses,* by Willson Whitman. Oxford University Press. $1.75.

*LaGuardia,* by Jay Franklin. Modern Age. 35c.

*Rehearsal in Oviedo,* by Joseph Peyré. Knight. $2.

*To Have and Have Not,* by Ernest Hemingway. Scribner's. $2.50.

*The Labor Spy Racket,* by Leo Huberman. Modern Age. 35c.

*New Writing,* edited by John Lehmann. Knopf. $2.75.

*Night at Hogwallow,* by Theodore Strauss. Little, Brown. $1.25.

*Famine,* by Liam O'Flaherty. Random House. $2.50.

*Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy,* by James S. Allen. International. $1.25.

*If War Comes,* by R. Ernest Dupuy and George Fielding Eliot. Macmillan. $3.

*When China Unites,* by Harry Gannes. Knopf. $2.50.

. . . *And Spain Sings. Fifty Loyalist Ballads.* Edited by M. J. Bernadete and Rolfe Humphries. Vanguard. $1.

*Men Who Lead Labor,* by Bruce Minton and John Stuart. Modern Age. 35c. Book Union Selection.


**SAT.—NOV. 13—8 p.m.**

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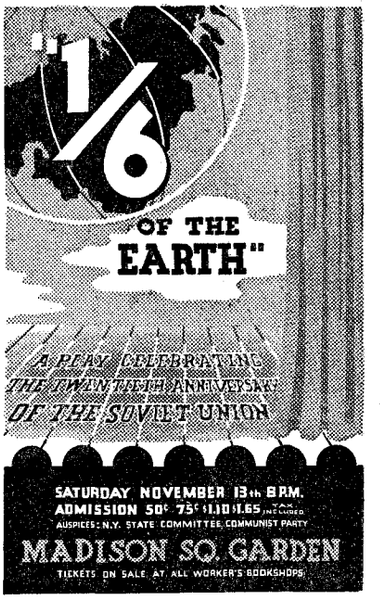


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# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

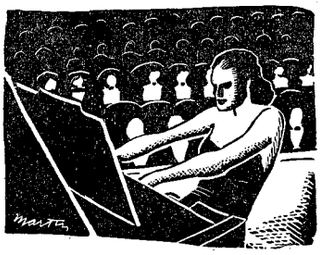
***Odets's "Golden Boy" and other plays—Amkino's "Return of Maxim"—New disk recordings***

THE people who saw Clifford Odets buried under a Hollywood tombstone last year must be feeling a little discomfited; the interment accorded the Group Theater in various quarters turns out to have been equally premature. For in *Golden Boy* Odets has written what is by far his best play, and the Group, under the direction of Harold Clurman, have given it a consummate production. Not only is the entire play structurally as solid and tight as were the individual scenes in *Waiting for Lefty;* not only is the characterization profoundly understanding and poignant, the writing vivid in Odets's inimitable style, the situations highly theatrical, and the thinking straight as a die. But in *Golden Boy* Odets has achieved that desideratum, a play rich in social implications but cast in a new mold: not a strike play, not a soap-box exhortation, not a "conversion" drama, but a story that grips for its own sake and yet plants its meaning squarely in any eye that can see.

The son of an old Italian fruit peddler, possessing a fine musical talent, young Joe Bonaparte is the victim of profound social disharmony. "There is no war in music but down on the streets, that's war. . . . People have hurt my feelings for years." Driven by his sense of inadequacy, his need for self-justification in a society that denies spiritual for material values, Joe discovers that his hands are not only those of a violinist but a boxer. Regardless of the risk to his priceless fingers, he deflects his passionate sense of life, his desire for achievement, into a career that promises him wealth and fame.

The manager into whose hands he falls has decent instincts; he wants a home, a family. But Tom Moody is now no better than the business of which he has become a part. The exigencies of the prizefighting game drive him to use his young mistress Lorna Moon to hold Joe to boxing when he begins to feel the pull of his old talent. Lorna and Joe fall in love. The triangle is a desperate and insoluble one, for Lorna cannot bear to hurt Moody, who saved her from the gutter, who needs her and loves her, and yet she cannot deny her love for Joe whose need for her, under the pressure of sudden success, inner confusion and bitterness, is no less great than Moody's. She tries to stick to Moody and fails, for in his big match Joe accidentally kills his opponent. He goes to pieces, and throws up boxing, but what can he do? His hands are ruined for music; he has been geared too high to step back into obscurity and simplicity. He is wasted, spoiled. In desperation he takes Lorna for a mad drive; they smash up and are killed.

Told baldly the story reads like a synopsis from a pulp magazine. It cannot convey any measure of the skill with which Odets shows his characters driven askew by what is at bottom a primitive struggle for survival that turns



Charles Martin

insensibly into a scramble for profit, by distorted values, by a heritage of confused ideals, by tragic frustration. Always possessing a gift for creating significant human lives, he outdoes himself in his portraits of the old fruit-vendor, with his hopeless dream of a life of beauty for his son; of the sensitive girl, sprung from a background of drunkenness and poverty, who "feels like a tramp"; of the ebullient young cab-driver; the philosophic neighbor, Mr. Carp; the sagacious trainer; the young C.I.O. organizer who finds a meaning in life by fighting for his beliefs, "a different kind of fight from Joe's"; lastly of Joe Bonaparte himself, driven by the virus of ambition and lust for riches—"those cars are poison in my blood"—alternately sickened and intoxicated by his success, a victim of the conflict between his real nature and the society into which he cannot amalgamate himself. The closing scene drives home the bitter lesson with hardly a word spoken. The idealistic father and the men who, themselves suckers, have preyed on Joe, are juxtaposed across the stage. Centered between them is the labor organizer; *he* has the last word: "What waste!"

There is hardly a performance which is less than first rate, and Morris Carnovsky as the father and Luther Adler in the title role contribute some of the finest acting that you can find in America today. If there is anything to quibble about, it is in the writing of the role of Eddie Fuselli, the gangster who muscles in as Joe's backer—a typical complex Odets creation, but whose attitude and relation to Joe lack the lucidity which inform the other characters and relationships in the play—and in Odets's occasional overemphasis on comedy, a venial fault which probably arose from a desire to safeguard the success of the play.

If one considers the Surry Players' production of *As You Like It* as a youthful frolic, its boisterousness falls into the proper perspective. Samuel Rosen has provided a stylized and fantastic pattern of staging for one of Shakespeare's loveliest plays. He breaks up the dialogue with constant movement, dramatizes the spoken word with vivid pantomime, and creates an atmosphere of zest and freshness at the same time that he gives full measure to the graver interludes—the loyalty and sickness of old Adam, Orlando's anger and despair at his brother's neglect.

Out of this conception arise the faults as well as the virtues of the production. Liveliness and verve too often slide into a kind of hectic burlesque. Katherine Emery's Rosalind, who is given to undue grimacing and hopping about seems unduly naïve and childish. Although hampered by the fluttering walk which Mr. Rosen seems to have foisted on all his women characters, Anne Revere's Celia combines buoyancy with the happy serenity which is the essence of *As You Like It.* Shepperd Strudwick's Orlando is a gallant portrait, admirably combining the grave and the gay. The other actors all contribute straightforward and plausible performances and the entire cast handles the blank verse with ease and conviction. This *As You Like It* marks the debut of a group who hope to work together on some sort of permanent basis, eschewing Hollywood on the one hand and individual Broadway triumphs on the other.

In sharp contrast to the unpretentiousness of this Shakespearean production is the Theatre Guild's *Amphitryon 38,* about which pretention hangs like a stone, despite the unsurpassed and galvanic adroitness of the Lunts and the vivid performance of Richard Wood as Mercury. For three acts the action revolves around one idea and one incident whose tenuousness would endanger a thirty-minute one-act play. In the main S. N. Behrman's adaptation closely follows Giraudoux's treatment of Jupiter's legendary passion for a mortal woman, Alcmene, whose love for her husband Amphitryon renders her indifferent even to the advances of a god. A comedy of errors ensues in which Jupiter disguised as Amphitryon sleeps with Alcmene and the real Amphitryon retires with a friend of his wife by mistake. Nothing at all comes of this exchange since Jupiter benevolently spares Alcmene all knowledge of her double mistake, and withdraws from further competition.

Of course such a situation has comic possibilities. But contrasted with *As You Like It,* which also uses the mistaken identity device and relies plentifully on fantasy, and despite the brilliance of the Behrman-Giraudoux dialogue, *Amphitryon 38* appears not only superficial and lacking in all human values (so warmly present in the Shakespearean comedy) but tawdry. The honesty of Elizabethan bawdiness compares favorably with innuendo which passes for Gallic sophistication. There is more than a touch of decadence about *Amphitryon 38,* which is at best a deplorable waste of talent on the part of actors and writers alike.

ELEANOR FLEXNER.

## THE SCREEN

EVERY spectator seeing *The Return of Maxim* at the Cameo Theater will come out knowing more of the conditions under which the revolutionary press fights and

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Recently I saw a German film made in the late 1920's rejoicing in the victories of the German socialist press, and sitting there knowing that these victories were now tragedies and that printing presses that once printed the *Arbeiter* are now printing the *Stürmer* was a pretty sad experience. Watching *The Return of Maxim* has as much contrast between past and present, but here the emotion is a different one. Keeping firmly its policy as the vanguard voice of the working classes, the tiny *Pravda* born twenty-five years ago now is read by millions whose demand for it still exceeds the supply of paper available, and its brother newspapers in the Soviet Union are printed and read in over sixty languages throughout one-sixth of the earth.

This sense of exultation, of victory in accomplishment, and the memory of the men and women who fought to keep the Russian revolutionary press alive and useful lies behind every element in the making of this new film. *The Youth of Maxim* told a simpler story, but *The Return of Maxim* sings more fully, more conscious of the heroism of Maxim and his comrades. The lyric realism of the first film is more choral and symphonic now—in the crescendo climaxes of Lev Slavin's scenario, in the music of Shostakovich, even in the composition and quality of Moskvin's sensitive photography.

But the directorial team of Gregori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg has become in the fifteen years of its existence so sure a creative instrument that, although *The Return of Maxim* changes the tone of *The Youth,* the two films appear to be parts of the same work of art, waiting for the artists to make the third and loftiest part. For the consistency of this development we have to examine the periods and subjects of the Maxim films.

The first film was not about a revolutionary period. It took place in the years of black reaction after the 1905 revolution, and was a film about political growth—as seen in the development of young Maxim. In the second film the growth has reached the immediate pre-war stage where the workers' party is strong enough to have a mass organ, to have members in the Duma, to lead a general strike, and is fighting toward the period of the third film, which will be 1917. These three political stages must of necessity decide the levels of scenario structure, characterizations, and tone of the three films.

*The Return of Maxim* begins with the heightened industrial activity that prepared war supplies for months before the declaration of war. The workers of a factory having struck against the production of such war materials, the order is secretly transferred to another factory. The name of this factory has to be ascertained so that its workers will know, and maintain the strike against the

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manufacture of war supplies. This job is delegated to a stranger, Fiodor, who is, we realize when we see him, the Maxim who was left, serial-wise, in an unresolved conclusion in *The Youth of Maxim*. Fiodor-Maxim's actions from there on have the character of exploits, almost adventures, which seem an oversimplified solution to the search for an expression of these hectic days, but successfully convey the atmosphere of political action in prewar St. Petersburg. Along with the theatrically stepped-up scenario, the characters of the earlier period reflect their new period, and Boris Chirkov and Valentina Kibardina, the Maxim and Natasha of the trilogy, dress their warm realism in slightly more declamatory styles, playing their emotions with a greater intensity and awareness of the symbolism of their roles than was apparent in *The Youth of Maxim*.

Not unusually for a Soviet film, the minor characters are created as vividly as the leading roles—whether it is Zharov's remarkable portrait of the factory clerk, or a repentant strikebreaker in a five-minute episode, or the newspaper's poet, or the two quarreling old cronies, Yerofeyev from the lathe-bench and Mishchenko from the foundry.

The truly great episode of the film is not on the barricades, but in the Duma, where the opposing forces of revolution and reaction clash with a tremendous force that is modern film-making at its best. The barricade encounter itself is not climactic in the structure of the trilogy—it is this entire film that is leading to the climax of the third and last film, which accounts for the seeming anti-climax of the second film's conclusion—actually an introduction to the third film.

Through the whole warm length of *The Return of Maxim* moves the guiding thread of *Pravda*—a truth that clarifies all the actions and motives of the film as in actuality it clarified the movement toward revolution. The full strength of the role that *Pravda* played in this period would be conveyed by a re-reviewing of *The Youth of Maxim*, which tells of the harder struggle that there was before there was a *Pravda*. Perhaps Amkino could be persuaded to reissue the first film at the same time as the present second, to give us a taste of what the Maxim cycle will look like when the trilogy is complete.

EUGENE HILL.

## PHONOGRAPH RECORDINGS

THE record set of the month (and the year) is put out by a company that is almost unknown, features a composer most concert-goers never heard of, and consists of eight symphonies that aren't symphonies at all (one of them takes only one side of a ten-inch record). In other words, it's one of the most surprising and unusual releases ever issued, but it is also its own shock antidote: once you've dipped into this clear spring of bubbling tonal champagne you'll never want to emerge from a glorious musical jag. The composer is one Dr. William Boyce, an English organist who lived from 1710-79 and earned a respected place in music history for his church works and a famous collection of cathedral music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But it seems the estimable doctor diverted himself with worldly instrumental music on occasion. Maybe he was ashamed of it or his friends convinced him of the error of his ways; anyhow these little "symphonies" (really concerti grossi) languished in oblivion until 1928 when the British composer Constant Lambert (who wrote *The Rio Grande*) dug them up, filled in an occasional harmony indicated by the figured bass part, cued in the wind parts, and persuaded the Oxford University Press to publish them. They have been played occasionally in concert, but not until the Timely Recording Co. (the same lively concern that put out the disks of Hanns Eisler and other workers' songs) took a chance—that no major company had the intelligence or courage to take—have we had a real chance to savor the infinite variety, songfulness, and intoxicating vivacity of these wholly delightful works. The New York Simfonietta under the animated baton of Max Goberman plays them here and plays them superbly. A little polish and tonal luster may be lacking, but the performance is clean, accurate, and above all it captures the music's gusto. You'll be reminded at times of Handel and again (in the eighth symphony) of Bach, but Dr. Boyce had individuality of his own as well as unflagging invention and humor. The Timely Recording Co. deserves an enthusiastic boost for a venture that is both idealistic and successful—a set of records that truly enriches and broadens one's musical experience and that will be a source of unending pleasure.

After Boyce has swiped all my superlatives, there isn't a lot to say about the other current releases, but a significant point is that the other minor companies back up Timely in putting the big fellows to shame. Musicraft follows up its complete version of the Bach "Coffee" cantata (Set 5) with the previously unrecorded Bach organ trio-sonatas Nos. 5 and 6 (Set 6), played by Carl Weinrich, and the lyrical Mozart flute quartets in D-major and A-major (Set 7), played by the Oxford Ensemble of WQXR broadcast fame. And Gamut puts out the first recording—in the original language—of the Bach motet "Jesu, meine Freude" (Set 1) done by the Madrigal Singers under Lehman Engel, and will soon have ready the first recording of the Bloch violin-and-piano sonata.

The major companies stick to more hackneyed material, but Victor gets out of its rut a bit with the Stokowski "synthesis" of the original score of Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (Set M-391) and Siloti's old war-horse, the Liszt *Todentanz*, played by Sanroma and the Boston Pop Orchestra (Set M-392). The latter work is nineteenth-century horror music at its best, but the Moussorgsky contains some of the most profoundly stirring and earthy music ever written. Fortunately, Stokowski forgets Hollywood for a few minutes (hear his Liszt second rhapsody on Victor 14422 to realize how completely tub-thumping

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he can go) and gives us the great scenes from *Boris* with a maximum of Moussorgsky and a minimum of Stokowski, marvelously played and recorded.

I can't get as rapturous over Brahms and Toscanini as several millions seem to, so the maestro's recording of the Brahms *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* (Victor Set M-355) leaves me lukewarm, but it's only fair to note that the work is an emphatic best-seller and that it is played with the same remarkable zest and razor-edged accuracy that distinguished his recorded performance of Beethoven's seventh symphony. ROY GREGG.

★

## *Forthcoming Broadcasts*

(Times given are Eastern Standard, but all programs listed are on coast-to-coast hookups)

*Public Housing.* "New York Communities Prepare for Action on Housing" is the subject of talks by Mary K. Simkhovitch, Louis H. Pink, Charles Poletti, Supreme Court Justice, and others, Sat., Nov. 13, 12:30 p.m., N.B.C. red.

*President Roosevelt.* The President will speak on the unemployment census during his last fireside chat before the opening of Congress, Sun., Nov. 14, 10:30 p.m., N.B.C. blue and red, and C.B.S.

*Congress.* Opening ceremonies of the special session of Congress, Mon., Nov. 15, 12 noon, N.B.C. blue.

*Maury Maverick.* The congressman from Texas will speak on "What's Ahead of Congress at the Special Session," Tues., Nov. 16, 9 p.m., N.B.C. blue.

*Unemployment Census.* Instructions on how to fill out the unemployment census blanks, Tues., Nov. 14, 10:45 p.m., N.B.C. red.

*Wages and Hours Bill.* Talk by Congressman Martin Dies, Wed., Nov. 17, 7:45 p.m., N.B.C. blue.

*The Constitution.* America's Town Meeting of the Air features Senator Edward Burke, Stanley Reed, and Norman Thomas in a discussion on "Whose Constitution—Conservative, Liberal, or Radical?" Thurs., Nov. 18, 9:30 p.m., N.B.C. blue.

*Concert Music.* N.B.C. symphony orchestra, Pierre Monteux conducting, Sat., Nov. 13, 10 p.m., N.B.C. red and blue; Philharmonic Symphony Society, with Walter Gieseking as soloist, Barbirolli conducting, Sun., Nov. 14, 3 p.m. C.B.S.

## *Recent Recommendations*

### MOVIES

*Green Fields.* A charming and sincere film of a Talmudic student who goes out into the world in search of truth and honest people.

*In the Far East.* A topical melodrama of wreckers, Japanese agents, and Trotskyites in Siberia which, while not ranking with the best Soviet films, is nevertheless good, solid fare and maintains the usual high standard of Soviet acting.

*China Strikes Back.* A vivid picture of the Chinese people's defense against the Japanese invasion, which strikes a new high for documentaries.

*Stage Door.* The film version of the Kaufman-Ferber play is a rather sensitive and intelligent film of life in a theatrical boarding house.

### PLAYS

*The Outlaw* (Artef, N. Y.). A somewhat thin story of a Jewish Robin Hood brilliantly and wittily presented under Benno Schneider's unmatched direction.

*Susan and God* (Plymouth, N. Y.). Rachel Crother's amusing comedy, improved by the appearance of Gertrude Lawrence, comes very near the level of brilliant satire.

# "GOINGS-ON"

**MEMO:** Keep November 14th open! Greet ANNA SOKOLOW and Dance unit in their debut at Guild Theatre. Make your reservations now at New Masses office, 31 East 27th Street. Tickets: 55c—$2.20.

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**BOOK & MAGAZINE GUILD** invites you to its festival-dance, Saturday Evening, November 13th, Troya Hall, 153 West 64th Street. Admission: 75c.

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**SCOTT NEARING,** Tues. eve., Nov. 16, 6:30—8 P. M. "The Struggle for Power"; 8:30—10 P. M. "Imperial Japan and Colonial China." Manhattan Opera House, 34th St. & 8th Ave. Adm. each class, 50c; both 75c.

**PERSONAL—DEAR GUS:** All will be forgiven if you take me to the **Art Front Ball** at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem on Thanksgiving Eve., Nov. 24. See our ad in this issue.

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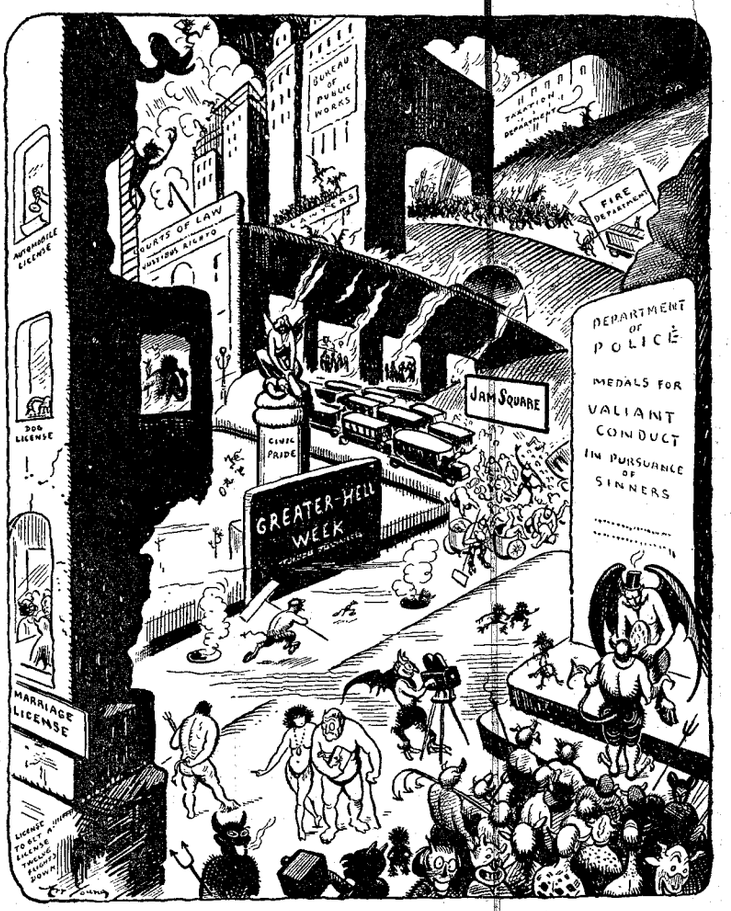
# GO TO HELL

NOV 13 1934
OF PITT

## with Art Young

## A REVIEW BY MIKE GOLD

[*Digested from the* NEW MASSES *for February 6, 1934.*]




SINCE Mark Twain, have there been many clearer notes expressed of the basic American folk-mind than may be found in the drawings of Art Young? All the virtues and faults of the American people are contained in these shrewd scratchings of a master-pen: the credulity, the good-natured humor, the scorn for windbags, political and ecclesiastical, a sort of generous gambling spirit, an instinctive hatred of injustice, a simplicity and homely barnyard greatness.

Art Young carries over into the modern social revolution this native tradition of a cornfed socialism that extends from Abraham Lincoln down through Mark Twain, and Bob Ingersoll, Walt Whitman, Thomas Nast, Edward Bellamy, Brann the Iconoclast, Ryan Walker, Carl Sandburg, the old Appeal to Reason and Eugene V. Debs.

It was a socialism that often went off the deep end into ineffective bathos, but at other times attained the strength and inevitability of all living things with roots in the soil. It is a power that is being lost, somehow; perhaps the skyscraper, the aeroplane, and the immensity of monopoly-capitalism in its fascist imperialist stage have forever changed the tempo of political life, and laid different and sterner demands on those who fight against the mounting horror of an insane and futile system.

Yet, I for one, believe that any young revolutionary trade unionist has a great deal to learn by studying the life of Gene Debs, just as any young Communist artist may gain immensely by studying the work of Art Young, who is still, after forty years of activity, a master propagandist of the American revolution.

Few intellectuals, by taking thought, can acquire such sensitive relation to the unwritten lore of the masses. It is instructive to observe, for instance, with what wit and strategy Art Young has conducted a flank attack on the profiteers of religion. Growing up in the atmosphere of the first Darwinian controversy, Art pierced to the heart of it all, even as a young man. Religion was another of the capitalist methods of policing the mind of workers and farmers, and keeping them humping. Religion was based on fear, and little else. Just as on earth, the masses had been taught the fear that chaos and hunger might follow if they shook off Andy Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, just so had they been persuaded that if they rebelled a monstrous pit of hell awaited them in eternity. It was one of the most useful lies ever invented by a master-class, and many wage-slaves, Art Young observed, fought bitterly against those who tried to liberate them from this fear.

There was no use trying to deprive these dupes of their marvelous future in Hell. It would be better, Art decided, to accept the reality of their Hell and make a visit there. Perhaps a report on conditions, an exposure such as the muckrakers were making of American politics at the time, would influence some of the patriots of Hell. So in 1892, Art Young found an entrance to Hell in Chicago, went all the way down, looked around, interviewed the King, and returned to tell all. He discovered, he says, that the ancient abyss was becoming industrialized. "Slowly, the old King had managed to build a few railroads, coal chutes, eelvators running from one circle down to another, and everywhere I saw machines built for particular kinds of punishment."

Art warned the old King then that some of the big capitalists might band together when they got to Hell, form a trust, grab all the successful enterprises and crowd Satan to the wall. But the King dismissed the warning as absurd.

Art revisited him briefly in 1900, disguised as an old-fashioned minister named the Reverend Hiprah Hunt, who was grateful to find Satan still secure on his throne, and the Region an even worse place than he had expected.

Now Art Young has paid his latest visit to Hell. And what he finds there is fully reported in this big book of superb drawings and text.

Art pictures and describes the old native inhabitants; the Imps of worry, hypocrisy, bluff, vulgarity, hurry, and chance. They met him at the entrance to Hell, over the massive gates of which was a great Rotary sign: "You are now entering Hell. Welcome." Art met a wealthy friend, fortunately, and was able to do a little sightseeing. "But most sinners are immediately hurried into the heat and smell."

Art draws a road map of the Region, with its pipe lines for oil, looney islands, airport stations, sanitariums, football stadiums, and other modern developments going ninety miles down. He faithfully describes it all in pictures, some of which have the dark diabolic power and imagination of Gustav Doré, one of Art's masters, others the prairie mother-wit that Art Young learned from nobody but himself.

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